Holy Week: The Triumph of the Spirit of Cain

The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting. MILAN KUNDERA

For Christians, Holy Week is the most meaningful and most significant week of the liturgical year—most meaningful and significant because the events of that week actually took place some two thousand years ago, and most meaningful and significant because they are every year somewhat liturgically remembered. But for the vast majority of people alive during that week two thousand years ago—or, indeed, for most living during any Holy Week since then—it is just another week, no different from any week before or after: Just another week filled with births and deaths, joys and tears, hopes and fears, loves and hates, mercy and violence, quiet and not so quiet desperation, empathy and enmity.

The primal spiritual encounter of Holy Week—between Satan and God, evil and good, the lie and the truth, death and life, total destruction and total salvation—takes place on the historical plane as an encounter between violence and nonviolence, violent hate and nonviolent love, violent justice and nonviolent righteousness, violent retribution and nonviolent forgiveness, violent mercilessness and nonviolent mercy, violent wounding and nonviolent healing, violent power and the power of nonviolence, violent holy men and a nonviolent Holy Man, violent people and a nonviolent person, the violence of the secular and the religious kingdoms of this world and the nonviolent Prince of Peace, violent monotheism and nonviolent monotheism, the violent Cain and the nonviolent Christ, the violent sword and the nonviolent cross. Jesus does not suffer and die quietly, in bed, from medical problems associated with old age—and there must be a reason in the Redemptive Plan of God through Jesus Christ for this.

Holy Week is situated and saturated in a life-and-death battle between violence and nonviolence. Take the violence of humanly planned and executed torture and murder out of Holy Week, and there is no Holy Week. Take Jesus' Nonviolent Love of all, of enemies and of friends, of His torturers and of His murderers, out of Holy Week and there is no Holy Week. If we do not choose to accept His Word as He communicates it, then we have no access to authentic revelation, which means we have no access to its power and wisdom.

So why do bishops, priests, ministers, and pastors refuse—almost universally, and almost universally in the spirit of willful obstinacy—to talk about, much less focus on, nonviolence, or its derivatives, e.g., nonviolent love, in their sermons about Holy Week during Holy Week? Is it for the same reason that they have reduced the torture and murder of Jesus to the mere words *"suffered and died"* in their Eucharistic Prayers? The same reason that they selectively forget to include Jesus'

response of Nonviolent Love towards His torturers and murderers in those same prayers?

Is it for the same reason that the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed are employed as the two fundamental public creeds of their Churches—two restatements of individual and communal beliefs that fail utterly to mention Christ's Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies? Why is it that these Creeds jump, non-stop, from the cradle to the crucifixion, ignoring the crucial revelation and teaching of the nonviolent love of all—always—which is the will of the Father done in heaven that Jesus comes to proclaim, by word and deed, must be done on earth as it is in heaven (Mt 5:38-48; Lk 6 27-36; Mt 6:10; Catechism of the Catholic Church, §2822). "[B]orn of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried," reads the Apostles' Creed. "He came down from heaven, and by the power of the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered, died and was buried," reads the Nicene Creed. Is it a matter of 'out of sight, out of mind,' in order to leave unquestioned and unquestionable the status quo which is already in view and in the mind?

Nowhere did the authors of these Creeds deem it necessary or worthy of mention that Jesus did not just die. He was **murdered**. An act of violence was responsible for His death—that's what the word murder communicates. Murdered means someone is intentionally killed by another person or persons. In this case, Jesus was intentionally killed by the violent religious and political rulers of His time and place, and by people who accepted to live in their spirit and according to their direction. Jesus is a victim of religious and state violence. More precisely, He is a victim of those human beings—whether they be a Pilate or a Caiaphas, a soldier or an armed servant— who buy into the violence and enmity justifying myths of a religion and/or of a state. Jesus came to free every human being and all humanity from being enslaved by the hypnotic spell of these mythical, non-existent, idolatrous, hideous and hellish gods of violence and enmity made in the image and likeness of fallen man. He accomplished this Divine Task by revealing in His words, and deeds, life and death, the true image of God, namely, God as *Father of all*, God as Nonviolent Love (*Agape*) of all—always.

Is it even rational to believe that the manner of Jesus' death and the Spirit in which He dies are irrelevant to the salvific truth and saving grace that God desires to communicate about Himself, His Will and His Way to humanity through Jesus? Is it possible to honestly hold that Jesus' steadfast response to violence—nonviolent love, and nothing else—demonstrated throughout His entire ordeal during Holy Week, is not essentially significant? That it does not reveal to humanity the knowledge of the power that saves from every form of evil and death, including, most pointedly, all species of violence and enmity?

As of Saturday of Holy Week, the spirit that seduced and possessed Cain has triumphed, as it has triumphed throughout all of human history. As of Saturday,

Holy Week is just another week glutted, at every point of longitude and latitude on this planet, with anonymous, countless victims of violence, largely forgotten, except in the hearts of those who loved them, where the memories often become the motivation for perpetuating that same violence. As of Saturday of Holy Week violence rules.

As of Saturday of Holy Week, nonviolence and the nonviolent love of all, even lethal enemies, are again incontestably verified by the world as an express ticket to the grave and to doormat status in history. Nonviolence can speak the truth with love—as Jesus did—to those who live by the power of violence, and those who live by the power of violence can snuff out that word out like a bug—as Jesus was—if that is what they want to do.

There is nothing in the torture and murder of the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels during Holy Week to suggest that He intended harm, in the short, medium or longterm, to anyone, including His lethal enemies. His steadfast nonviolent love toward both betraying friends and murderous enemies has no motive other than the intention to do the Will of the Father in heaven, to which Jesus wholeheartedly desires to be faithful. He knows that the Will of the Father is that all human beings be saved, and He knows the means by which they will be saved. On earth Jesus loves (*agapé*) as He knows the Father in heaven loves (*agapé*), because He knows this love (*agapé*) is the Will of the Father that must be faithfully and ceaselessly incarnated on earth in order to release the power—the only power—that can save each and all. He knows this love must be made visible by living it, so that each and all can imitate it (His *new commandment*), not only because it is the Way to Eternal Life but also because that Way—the Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies is the Way to participate in the Eternal Life of God "*who is love*" (*agapé*), here and now.

If ever there was a moment when we could see what the Love of God looks like, if ever there was a moment when we could see the Way of "*God who is love*" in action in the flesh, if ever there was a moment to clarify and solidify for ourselves what the imitation of Christ entails, what Jesus' *new commandment*—*Love one another as I have loved you*—means and calls for, prescribes and proscribes, Holy Week is that moment *par excellence*.

But, if we do not remember Holy Week accurately, if we do not remember the torture and murder of Jesus accurately, if we do not remember that the historical battle two thousand years ago was the battle between the evil of violence and the Nonviolent Love of all, at all times and under all circumstances, then to that extent we will be unable to follow Him properly, 'to love one another as He loves us' correctly. A fuzzy, euphemistic by omission, emaciated, watered-down, poorly articulated remembrance, whether during Holy Week or during the *anamnesis* narrative of the Eucharistic Prayer recited every week, results in the loss of grace otherwise available to a person, to a Christian community, and to all humanity through Jesus' sacrifice of self—an act of self-sacrifice that made the invisible love

(*agapé*) of God supremely visible to human beings trapped in the impenetrable spiritual darkness of disordered desires and passions.

Jesus is indeed a sacrificial victim, but not of some blood-thirsty God who demands His ounce of blood down to the very last drop to avenge a wrong done to him, before he will forgive. He is a victim of violence, of humanity's uninterrupted history of, and nurturing in, violence. He is a victim of individual human beings living in and out of the spirit of violence. But He is a victim of that violence *precisely because* He refuses it. He knows it and calls it what it is: lie, sin, the means and method of Satan, never an activity of God. He refuses to stop loving the violent ones as their *Father in heaven* loves them. He refuses the option of violence and chooses instead the option of Nonviolent Love because He knows that only choosing the Way of God—*agapé*—can impart to those murdering Him, and to all humanity, the gift of the very Life of God—that same Divine Nonviolent *Agapé*—that can save them, and everyone, from falling forever into an eternally inescapable black hole.

Jesus is a sacrificial victim to human violence and for human beings because He chooses nonviolent love of all—even lethal enemies—as His option to confront violence, in order to reveal to humanity the only Way out of the wickedness and snares of otherwise unconquerable evil. The sacrifice of Jesus is a sacrifice of Love.

But as of Saturday of Holy Week, the book on Jesus' life has been closed by the victorious violent ones. It is now entombed, seemingly forever, in the bowels of the earth, together with all the books on all the lives of all the billions of victims of violence—never to be read by anyone. And as far as His opening the gateway to salvation for all humanity, well, He couldn't even save Himself, could He? His unrealistic, impractical, foolish, idealistic Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies was powerless before the power of violence. Wasn't it? It bit the dust and, as of Saturday of Holy Week, was returning to dust. As of Saturday of Holy Week, the power that Cain released into the human condition continued to reign in human existence—with no way out even imaginable. The law of violence and its seed—fear—and its most destructive fruit—also fear—simply continue to rule human life, as they have done from time beyond recorded memory.

Station XII: Jesus Dies on the Cross

"*Consummatum est*." The death rattles, the open eyes, the limp, heavy, breathless body, this is how it ends, on a small piece of dirt on a small planet in a small solar system, which is only one of a hundred billion solar systems in a small galaxy, which is only one of billions of galaxies in the known universe. On this little space, life, personality, and possibility expire.

Hydrogen continues to turn into helium on the sun; people in China and Finland and Angola go about their business; microscopic life eats microscopic life in a drop of water; politicians and their moneyed friends continue to connive as usual; fear seizes the hearts of millions; romance fills the hearts of millions of others; boredom and fatigue empty the hearts of billions; meals are cooked and eaten; dreams are dreamt; revenge is planned; games are played and tens of thousands are buried each day. All this and more continues to happen oblivious to the fact that a person has just freely chosen to give up His life on the cross of nonviolent love. Does anyone know? Does anyone care? Was it worth it? Was it really the right course? What difference does it make?" (*Stations of the Cross of Nonviolent Love*)

So ends Holy Week. Another in the succession of unending unholy weeks of violence has concluded. A life of Nonviolent Love, the life of a human being who believed that through living this Way He was being unreservedly faithful to the will of God and serving humanity has also come to an end. The results: another week of total triumph for the spirit of Cain.

---EMMANUEL CHARLES MCCARTHY

Monday: Holy Week-A Dangerous Memory

Friends,

An accurate remembrance of Jesus' torture and murder during Holy Week and of His response of nonviolent love to the violence directed against Him is a very dangerous memory. It is dangerous first of all because it is a memory that ends in Jesus' total destruction, with His friends betraying Him, running away and hiding in fear for their lives. All hope that Jesus, the incarnational paragon of nonviolence and nonviolent love was going to bring about significant social, political or religious change in things as they are and as they always have been was—as of three o'clock in the afternoon on Friday of Holy Week—as dead as Jesus. Jesus was dead wrong; the meek never have and never will possess the earth. The violent rule. The default option of all ruling power comes from the barrel of a gun. The violent may tolerate the likes of the nonviolent Jesus for a while but can and will do-him-in if ever they feel the need to do so. As of Saturday of Holy Week, Jesus changed nothing socially, politically or religiously in Israel or in the world. That is a dangerous memory for any Christian who espouses any rendering of Constantinian Christianity—conservative, liberal or radical.

Tuesday: Holy Week—A Dangerous Memory

Friends,

A second reason that an accurate remembrance of Holy Week and of the Passion of Jesus in the *anamnesis* of the Eucharistic Prayer are potentially dangerous memories is that memory defines known history. If the only memory available is the memory of those who were the victors, who successfully prevailed, then the very identity of people is formed from the narration of these memories and from the values, attitudes and beliefs the victors and the successful embody and encourage. Generally there is hardly any remembrance in history of the losers, the oppressed, the forgotten, the broken, the victims—like Jesus of Nazareth.

When secular and religious memory is controlled by the 1%, it is assured that what they include and what they erase, what they emphasize and what they downplay, what they glorify and what they ignore in memory, and therefore in history, has as its purpose creating an identity for human beings, which is thoroughly consistent with the interests and needs of the 1%. As Johannes Metz writes, "Selective memory that remembers only the triumph of the powerful and "screens out" the agony of their victims, creates a false consciousness of our past and an opiate for our present."

Since grace works through nature and not independent of it, the primal experiential memory during Holy Week should be the primal natural phenomena of Holy Week, the agony of the victim Jesus at the hands of the powerful, and by empathic extension the agony of all victims of the "great ones." But it is not. Such a memory is too dangerous to the 1% of this world, who have built their victories and success on an ongoing, *en masse*, agonizing crucifixion of human beings. But if memory is distorted, by commission or by omission, to that extent it will distort any spiritual, metaphysical or mystical experience and/or interpretation derived from it.

Martin Luther said of the princes of Germany who were protecting him from the violence of the Church of Rome but who were also being attacked by the peasants they had been brutally oppressing for generations, "*It is easier today for a prince to get to heaven by killing a peasant*

than by prayer." The memory reflected upon in sermons and homilies and pieties during Holy Week, like the memory presented during the Eucharist, is composed and mediated, since the time of Constantine, by the victorious 1% and their kept scribes. Think about that and the dearth of concern about the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels and His Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies in all the Churches of Christianity today and for the last 1700 years.

Wednesday: Holy Week—A Dangerous Memory

Friends,

A third reason that accurate remembrances of Holy Week and of Jesus' Passion in the *anamnesis* of the Eucharist Prayer are potentially dangerous memories is that such memories do not look only to the past; they also look toward the future. Acute memories of acute human suffering have the power to motivate people to make life better in the future, especially if the particular suffering remembered is still unabatedly operative in the world. New memories of human suffering or new insight into well-known memories of human suffering can reveal the tragic flaw in the taken-for-granted worldview of a group. Pondering the memory of a single suffering person has the power to undermine the prevailing myths by which a secular or a religious society and its rulers live and operate, e.g., the memory of one Third World mother in agony and out of her mind with horror holding her child who has just been decapitated by a First World drone or smart bomb. But, memory must be kept alive for it to have a future and not just a past.

The Church is supposed to be the bearer of the dangerous memory of Jesus, a victim of the violence of the powerful, and by compassionate extension the bearer of the dangerous memory of all the victims of the violence of the powerful across the ages down to this very day. The Church is supposed to be the bearer of the dangerous memory of Jesus' torture and death that motivates witnessing to humanity by word and deed to overcome evil with good (Christlike agape). The Church is supposed to be the Body of Christ that responds to its own violent victimization in the Way it remembers Christ responded to His violent victimization—thereby breaking the perennial cycle of violent reciprocity, retaliation and revenge by returning good (agape) for evil. The Church is suppose to be that group of people who hears and listens attentively to the anguished cries of intolerable pain of the victim of the violence of the powerful, Jesus of Nazareth, and by the grace of His cries hears, with compassion and urgency, the anguished cries of all the victims of the violence of the powerful. But is this what the institutional Church is?

Do the Churches of Christianity, in whatever nation they may be situated, proclaim the memory of Jesus in such a way that it draws Christians and others into *strongly identifying with* the victims of the violence of the powerful, beginning with Jesus? Or, is the proclamation of the memory of the torture and murder of Jesus by the institutional Churches of Christianity made so metaphysically and mystically circuitous and innocuous that these Churches nurture their Christian people into *strongly identifying with* the powerful and their violent agents, who operate out of the same spirit and myth as their occupational predecessors, the torturers and murders of Jesus?

Thursday: Holy Week—A Dangerous Memory

The Eucharist, thanks to which, God's absolute 'no' to violence, pronounced on the cross, is kept alive through the centuries. The Eucharist is the sacrament of non-violence!

-RANIERO CANTALAMESSA, O.F.M. Cap. (March 11, 2005)

The *narrative* of Jesus' Passion and death was the first part of the Gospel Tradition to acquire a fixed structure and, of all portions of the Gospels, was the first to be included as a recited liturgical remembrance. Note it is the *narrative* of Jesus' Passion and death that was the central remembrance around which the Gospels took form and that was the primal remembrance of Christian liturgical recital. Note also, it was *narrative*, and only *narrative*, tethered intrinsically to the Gospels' Passion *narrative*, which was primal and paramount—not theological, metaphysical or mystical expositions of the Passion of Jesus.

Probably a billion Christians participate in the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, the *Agapé* Meal, the Mass, the Divine Liturgy with some remembrance of Jesus' Passion and death every week. Moreover, billions of other Christians over the last two thousand years have also participated in the Eucharist. Think what the Church and the world might be today, if today and yesterday, Christians continuously heard in the *anamnesis*/remembrance narrative of the Eucharist Prayer—instead of the verbal generalities "suffered" and "died" as the remembrance of Jesus Passion and death—a narrative of particulars drawn directly from the narratives of the Gospels. For example, suppose that instead of simply "suffered and died," a billion Christians this week heard and billions of Christians going all the way back to the time of Constantine continuously heard and pondered a liturgical recital of the Passion narrative along the lines of the following: what would be the state of the Church and humanity at this moment?

...On the night before He went forth to His eternally memorable and life-giving death, like a Lamb led to slaughter, rejecting violence, loving His enemies, and praying for His persecutors, He bestowed upon His disciples the gift of a New Commandment:

"Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another."

Then He took bread into His hands, and giving thanks, broke it, and gave it to His disciples saying:

"Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my body, which will be given up for you."

In a similar way, when the Supper was ended, He took the chalice. And once more giving thanks, He gave it to His disciples, saying:

"Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins, "Do this in memory of me."

Obedient, therefore, to this precept of salvation, we call to mind and reverence His passion where He lived to the fullest the precepts which He taught for our sanctification. We remember

His suffering at the hands of a fallen humanity filled with the spirit of violence and enmity. But, we remember also that He endured this humiliation with a love free of retaliation, revenge, and retribution. We recall His execution on the cross. But, we recall also that He died loving enemies, praying for persecutors, forgiving, and being superabundantly merciful to those for whom justice would have demanded justice. Finally, we celebrate the memory of the fruits of His trustful obedience to thy will, O God: the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the enthronement at the right hand, the second and glorious coming. Therefore we offer You your own, from what is your own, in all and for the sake of all...

-Excerpt from THE NONVIOLENT EUCHARIST (1991)

The intentional erasure or hiding or ignoring of a memory or of history always serves an end. It is not possible to envision any spiritual advantage or to find any good end that is served by truncating the Eucharistic Passion narrative down to "suffered and died." Such an extremist shrinking of the narrative of Jesus' Passion all but converts the Eucharistic *anamnesis* into a liturgical instrument of amnesia.

Holy Thursday of Holy Week is a dangerous memory because it is the memory of the institution of the Eucharistic with its two commands: "Do this in memory of me," and the "new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you." If the memory of me is bowdlerized, then the content and meaning of the new commandment will be correspondingly bowdlerized. And, the consequence of this interconnected and interactive bowdlerization will be, in the Church and in humanity, what? Look out of the window or turn on the television!

The insertion by the Churches of Christianity of a *narrative* of Jesus' Passion—as clear and as descriptive as the narrative of the Gospels—into the *anamnesis*/remembrance of their Eucharistic Prayer is a requirement of truth, a requirement of *agapé*, a requirement of fidelity to the Word of God Incarnate. It is a gift all Christians need to receive from the leaders of their various Churches. It is a witness to the grace of the cross that all Christians and all humanity need to encounter in Christian practice.

Friday: Holy Week – A Dangerous Memory

Friends,

With what magnitude of overwhelming certainty must the truth—that the will of the Father was to nonviolently love $(agap \hat{e})$ all human beings always—have been in the mind and heart of Jesus on that first Good Friday, that He would choose to be tortured and murdered rather than live some other truth. It was a truth of the Father's will, which was so beyond doubt that He would choose to die living it rather than to live by abandoning it.

And yet, almost universally the institutional Churches of Christianity, their leaders and most Christians are indifferent towards that same truth of the Father and Jesus. They are breezily dismissive of it, or superficially critical of it, or mindlessly mocking of it, or aggressively hostile to it.

For popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, ministers, pastors and Christians, who follow the Christian custom of rejecting this teaching of Jesus and raising up as a moral equivalent a contradictory teaching, e.g., a Christian justified-violence moral theory, Friday of Holy Week is a dangerous memory, if permitted to be remembered fully and accurately. But, it is not as dangerous to soul and body, to self and humanity as forgetting this truth that the Word of God Incarnate explicitly and concretely revealed for all to see that Friday for their redemption—revealed at such great cost in the currency of nonviolent suffering love. Take Jesus' nonviolent love of all, friends and enemies, out of Good Friday, and replace it with one of the customary Christian substitutes justifying violence and enmity that Church leaders and Christians now hold and teach as an equivalent way of faithfully following Jesus, and Good Friday—and all that it reveals of God, His power and His wisdom—does not exist.

One would think that something so irremovable and essential for a phenomenon to exist would be equally irremovable and essential whenever the phenomenon and its consequences are referred to or remembered. But, again, almost universally such is not the case in the Churches of Christianity, in the teachings of their leaders or in the minds and hearts of most Christians. Yet, what Jesus knew with certainty was the will of the Father and therefore essential for Him to live on Good Friday in 33 AD, what was equally essential for the Evangelists to record in the Gospels, and what was essential for Good Friday to even exist, is a non-thought in the minds of 95% of Christians today, regardless of their Church or the place they hold in their Church.

Dangerous indeed is the memory of Good Friday for any institution, religious or secular, built and maintained by the brick and mortar of violence and enmity and all the spiritually destructive spirits that they release into that institution. Even more dangerous is the memory of Good Friday for any human life, Christian or non-Christian, built and maintained by the brick and mortar of violence and enmity and all the spiritually destructive spirits they release into the mind and heart of that human life. Dangerous but potentially salvific. For in obliterating all hope that there is any such spiritual reality as redemptive violence, it unambiguously reveals wherein the hope for redemption lies—the nonviolent love of all, in trusting communion with and in trusting imitation of God Incarnate.

Saturday: Holy Week – A Dangerous Memory

Friends,

Viewing the mutilated body of the beloved is the most grief-ridden experience of human existence. It is incontrovertible evidence that evil rules. It is an unambiguous testament that in the end it is not the gentle, the nonviolent and the meek who inherit the earth but the cruel, the violent and the tough. Death and the dark side of reality are always the final victors.

The dead body of Christ lying wide-eyed and open-mouthed upon the ground seems to be not only incontestable testimony that all this is true, but also the most conclusive evidence that the cross of nonviolent love does not save—that the Sermon on the Mount is at best clearly wrong, and at worst, a socially irresponsible misleading of people into paths of total destruction.

It is all over! PERIOD. The person is placed in the grave never to be seen nor to see again, never to speak nor to be spoken to again, never to love nor to be loved again. Never! Never! Never! He or she won't be back. In the end those who choose the way of the of nonviolent suffering love end up like all others—food for worms. Their molecules randomly are irretrievably spread throughout an infinite and indifferent ocean of time and space. Hope of being again is pointless. Personal existence is lost forever.

One last moment. One last touch. One final kiss. A whispered, "I love you—Good-bye forever," and then the rock is placed over the tomb. Nonviolent Love, like hedonism, Aristotelianism, stoicism and all other philosophies, is ultimately an illusion without real power to save, a faith without any eternal potential or possibilities.

An occupied sepulcher is no more a symbol of hope than a Nazi crematory. The dead body of Jesus, the Jew from Nazareth, is a stark and irrefutable statement and memory of what violence and enmity do to a life, and that a life of Nonviolent Love is not the Way to overcome violence and enmity, evil and death.

Excerpt from THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS OF NONVIOLENT LOVE (13&14)

There is no more to be said and no more that can be done. There is only memory and unbearable suffering to be endured."

https://www.dropbox.com/s/mxqewmv2xxfpi4y/Pieta_Mothers%20of%20Sorrow%20%289min %2011sec%29%20%5BMcCarthy%5D.mp4?dl=0

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hB7ZPVWLTpU