

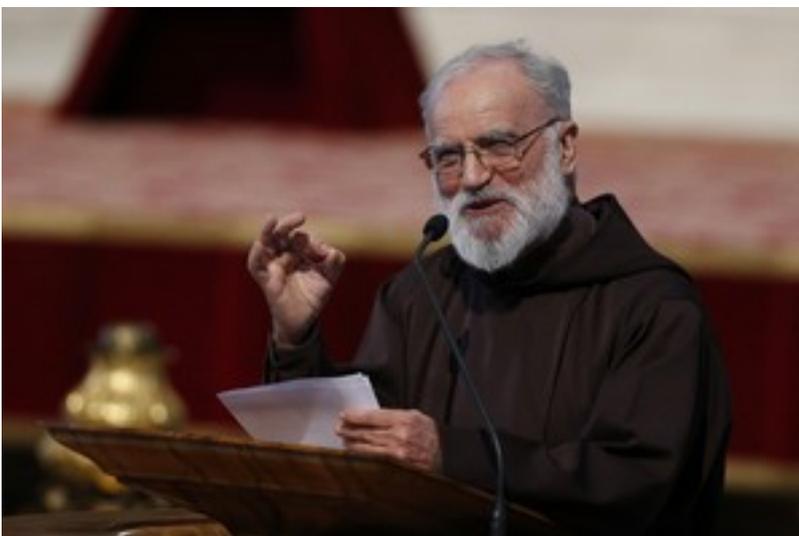
**Good Friday papal preacher:
In a changing world, the cross remains the same**

Vatican City, Apr 14, 2017 -

Even as sinful people in a society filled with violence and increasing secularism, we have hope because Christ's cross perdures, the papal preacher said at the Vatican's Good Friday Service.

"The cross, then, does not 'stand' against the world but for the world: to give meaning to all the suffering that has been, that is, and that will be in human history," Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., said April 14.

He gave the homily during the Celebration of the Lord's Passion presided over by Pope Francis in St. Peter's Basilica. Fr. Cantalamessa also gave the homilies at Mass at the chapel of Casa Santa Marta on Fridays throughout Lent.



Today, we are constantly hearing about death and violence, he said. "Why then are we here to recall the death of a man who lived 2,000 years ago?"

"The reason is that this death has changed forever the very face of death and given it a new meaning," he said.

Fr. Cantalamessa preached: "The cross is the living proclamation that the final victory does not belong to the one who triumphs over others but to the one who triumphs over self; not to the one who causes suffering but to the one who is suffering."

He explained how the Carthusian monks have adopted a coat of arms that hangs at the entrance to their monastery. It has a globe of the earth with a cross above it, and written across it: "Stat crux dum volvitur orbis," or "The cross stands firm as the world turns."

He described a painting by Salvador Dali, called "Christ of St. John of the Cross." It depicts Christ on the cross as if you are looking from above. Beneath him are clouds, and below that, water.

In a way, the water beneath Christ in this image, instead of earth, is a symbol of the lack of firm foundation of values in our current society, he explained. But even though we live in this very "liquid society," there is still hope, because "the cross of Christ stands."

"This is what the liturgy for Good Friday has us repeat every year with the words of the poet Venanzio Fortunato: 'O crux, ave spes unica,' 'Hail, O Cross, our only hope.'"

The point of Christ's Passion, however, is not an analysis of society, he said. "Christ did not come to explain things, but to change human beings."

In each of us, to varying degrees, is a "heart of darkness," he said. In the Bible, it is called "a heart of stone."

“A heart of stone is a heart that is closed to God’s will and to the suffering of brothers and sisters, a heart of someone who accumulates unlimited sums of money and remains indifferent to the desperation of the person who does not have a glass of water to give to his or her own child; it is also the heart of someone who lets himself or herself be completely dominated by impure passion and is ready to kill for that passion or to lead a double life,” he said.

He explained that even as practicing Christians we have these hearts of stone when we live fundamentally for ourselves and not for the Lord.

Quoting God’s words through the prophet Ezekiel, Fr. Cantalamessa said: “I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh.”

He went on to explain how in Scripture we are told that at the moment of Christ’s death, “The curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.”

This description, using apocalyptic language and signs, indicates “what should happen in the heart of a person who reads and meditates on the Passion of Christ.”

“The heart of flesh, promised by God through the prophets, is now present in the world: it is the heart of Christ pierced on the cross, the heart we venerate as the “Sacred Heart,”” he said.

We believe that though he was slain, because Christ has in fact been raised from the dead, his heart has also “been raised from the dead; it is alive like the rest of his body.”

And when we receive the Eucharist, we “firmly believe” that the very heart of Christ has come to “beat inside of us” as well, he explained.

“As we are about to gaze upon the cross, let us say from the bottom of our hearts, like the tax collector in the temple, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ and then we too, like he did, will return home ‘justified’.”