

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Lk 23:34)

We measure *generosity* in two ways. First, there is an objective or universal standard based on the accepted value of some commodity: a bar of gold is worth more than a bar of silver, for instance. And second, there is a subjective or personal standard based not on value according to commercial markets, but according to what something costs the individual, how much of their “net worth,” to use the language of Wall Street, is invested in the transaction. And so, to someone with little savings, \$100 is worth more than to someone who is a millionaire.

By either measure—universal or personal—the generosity of God is perfect, complete. With regard to the first, St Peter writes, “By His wounds, you have been healed.” (I Pet 2:24) Christ the New Adam (cf. I Cor 15:45) voluntarily offers Himself in atonement, in justice, in satisfaction of the debt that man—that we—cannot pay. Only the innocent lamb of God can take away the sins of the world, as He, Jesus, once told us: “...the Son of man came...to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mt 20:28) Now, with Jesus’ entrance into the tomb, the generosity of God has redeemed—liberated—the entire world and all of mankind: past, present and future...from the prison of sin.

But then, the generosity of God is also perfect by the second, more personal measure. In the Gospel, the Lord prepares us for this with the story of the widow’s mite. She contributes “out of her poverty”, by offering “all the living that she had.” (Lk 21:4) And He returns to this theme when He defends Mary Magdalene as she anoints Him: “Let her alone,” He says. “She has done what she could.” (Mk 14:6,8) In a sense, both women pre-figure the mystery of Good Friday: the God-Man has died on the Cross...“bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,” in the words of the *Stabat Mater*, “all with bloody scourges rent.” There remains nothing of Himself to give.

To my knowledge, on only one occasion does Jesus mention the duty of *gratitude*, and in particular, that of man to his Creator. After Our Lord heals ten lepers, just one, a Samaritan, returns to say, “Thank you.” With sadness, the Lord asks, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” (Lk 17:17,18)

Six chapters later in St Luke, Jesus says, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” (23:28) To which, Cardinal Newman, with reverence, places additional words on the Savior’s lips: “Weep not for me, for I am the Lamb of God, and am making atonement at My own will for the sins of the world. I am suffering now, but I shall triumph; and when I triumph, those souls, for whom I am dying, will either be my dearest friends or my deadliest enemies.” (Eighth Station)

Good Friday is the Feast of God’s *generosity* measured both ways: the universal scope and the personal sacrifice. “*Adoramus te Christe, et benedicimus tibi...*because by Your

Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.” And from First Peter: “You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” (1:18,19)

At the end of life, at the moment of the particular judgment, there will only be two possible outcomes for each person: either you and I will be among Jesus’ “dearest friends,” as Blessed Newman said, who have recognized the costly gift of the Lord’s generous mercy and have expressed gratitude to Him by the ever deepening transformation of our hearts through grace...or...we will be among his “deadliest enemies” who have neglected or been insensitive to the charity and sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross, where He is both priest and victim.

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Such words of infinite courtesy and generosity, and which no doubt remain true. But now, we *do* know what He has done for us.