

JOHN 19: 25-27

Dear brothers and sisters,

at the invitation of the Community of Sant'Egidio, we gathered in this Basilica of Santa Maria where we pray every night.

We do it with our heart hurting by the unjust and painful death of Beau, a young American who has died tragically a few days ago, not far from here, on the banks of the Tiber, and not far from the University he had chosen to attend with joy .

We are close to his family, his mother and father, who yesterday received the embrace of Pope Francis. We are close to the young Americans, students of John Cabot University, the President and to those who knew Beau humanity, sympathy, love for life, he who had been tried as a boy by a courageous battle against disease.

We too are at the foot of the cross, as Mary, Jesus' mother, Mary the mother of Cleopas, Mary Magdalene, and the youngest of the disciples, John. The cross is a sign of such an unjust and untimely death. And it's hard to find an answer to this pain. For this we lift our eyes at the Lord Jesus, innocent and friend, who more than all of us suffered with us and for us reading in our hearts our disorientation.

Beau, was full of vigor, sporty, passionate and determined to study, and dreamed as an adult to give a positive contribution to his country, the United States, of which we greet the representatives tonight present in our midst. Beau was a believer and he was aware of his frailty. He had fought a tough battle to win the cancer that had affected him as a child, becoming in Wisconsin contagious symbol of tenacious love for life. He was also well aware of the frailty of others, and therefore he participated in the preparation of a summer camp for poor youngsters. Certainly he loved to have fun with the ingenuity and the irrepressible enthusiasm of his age, just nineteen.

Jesus shares the pain of his death, more than us and before us. In his love for John, the youngest of the disciples - the evangelist emphasizes "the disciple whom he loved" there is also the personal love of Jesus for Beau. The love of Jesus gave him strength in times of trial, and gave, perhaps, fullness to the happiest moments of his short life. In this love we see the love for each young man. For you, who are praying with us this evening and for a whole generation that would, would want, a world free from evil. Jesus himself was wounded and continues to be wounded every time a life is cut, a mother suffers; each time, in an incomprehensible and sudden manner, death seems to take its revenge. This evening we hear the voice of Jesus. We contemplate his eyes searching the eyes of those who are around, aching, looking for light, for hope. We hear him say the words contained in this Gospel.

"Jesus saw his mother, and beside her the disciple whom he loved, he said to his mother:" Woman behold your son ". Then he said to the disciple: "Behold your mother". This is the answer of our teacher. While he is suffering, he asks us to love. In front of death, and the unjust and incomprehensible death, he asks to love. Indeed he entrusted the youngest to the mother and asks John to make Mary his mother. The church, with a motherly heart, welcomes the hopes that seem unfinished, broken by the cross and revives them in this embrace, because these are to bear fruit. This embrace, under the gaze of the Lord, shows that death is not the last word, because love holds the secret of the Resurrection. Jesus knows that in the

end good and life will prevail. He knows it having been hurt in his own flesh by the absurdity of the power of evil.

John will not be made for ever an orphan of hope; Beau, who looks at us from heaven, and with him every young person who faces life and its challenges, will not be made for ever an orphan of hope. Under the cross a family is rebuilt, a family that will fight and will hope in the Resurrection. A family in the name of the Lord Jesus, who was crucified and who died young, who rose for us, speaks to others, helping them to deal with every pain, every disease, every confrontation with evil. The people of God's friends is just that, a family that rallies around the master, in times of joy and at the hour of defeat. Because where there is love, life is reborn, here begins the dawn of a new day. I am certain that this is what Beau also wants, now that we can no longer do anything for him, but entrust him to God's mercy.

Dear friends, we must collect the expectation of life and of good life, which inhabited the heart of this young man, we must bring it to fruition for him. The Lord himself has carried Beau from the treacherous waters of the river and led him into his kingdom of eternal life, peace and justice. From the Lord Jesus and from his open side on the cross, through his love for Beau and for us, gushes instead a "river of living water welling up to eternal life". A river of pure love, naive, brave. Not muddy waters, but as the apostle John wrote in the book of Revelation, describing the kingdom of heaven, he will contemplate "a river of living water, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22, 1)

Let us drink to this hope, let us struggle and love, humbly, as we are asked to do by the Lord Jesus, who conquered death with his death. Under the cross, let us search the humble and powerful love of our master. Also let's do it in the name of Beau, knowing that God tonight, once again entrust to us the secret of life and faith in the Resurrection. Amen

Preaching by fr. Marco Gnavi
Prayer in memory of Beau Solomon
Rome, Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere
July 7th 2016