

The Rhythm of the Christian Life

The co-pilot and I arrived in smoggy Mexico City on Maundy Thursday afternoon (the day before Good Friday). We changed out of our uniforms and hopped on the subway, heading for downtown Mexico City. We emerged from the subway into a vast, boiling mass of people; it was like Disneyland at spring break. We stood on the edge of the Zócalo, the second largest public square in the world. Lined on one side by the National Palace, and on another by the Cathedral Metropolitana, it was an impressive sight. As we pushed our way through the throngs of people, I was beginning to realize that Holy Week in Mexico is a much different affair than it is in the U.S. We aimed for the twin Neo-Classical towers of the Cathedral.

Squeezing through the narrow entrance of the guarded gate, we entered the Cathedral during the middle of a church service. The place was carpeted wall-to-wall with people. We fought our way up one of the two lateral aisles towards the altar, trying not to get separated. As we went, I explained Maundy Thursday to my non-Christian flying partner. Maundy, derived from the Latin word for "mandate," refers to Christ's command to His disciples at the Passover meal to love one another.

The Mass exuded *high church*. There were a number of white-clad people standing in front of the altar, a flood of candles, burning incense, a chanter, the people singing their responses, and the priest delivering his homily from a pulpit raised fifteen feet above the floor. My Spanish isn't that good, so I had a hard time following along, but it was nonetheless an awe-inspiring spectacle. It was obvious, as we returned to the street, that there was going to be some kind of event later on. There were a number of policemen assembling to escort somebody somewhere.

The next morning, Good Friday arrived, warm and sunny. I was able to get in the three "R's" before heading back to the airport – reading, writing, and running. Running in Mexico City is also a different affair. It's at an elevation of 7,300' – I'm used to running at sea level, so I slowed my pace slightly. Dodging Mexican perros sleeping in the middle of the sidewalk and negotiating uneven sidewalks and huge curbs, I crossed Jose Stalin Street and Leon Trotsky Street.

While still headed outbound, I came across a procession. It had a surreal, carnival-like atmosphere. Vendors on the side streets sold grilled chicken and ice cream. There were loud "booms" from non-airborne fireworks. At the head of the procession was a man dressed as a robed Jesus, complete with a crown of thorns and blood streaming down his face. He was carrying a cross. Behind him was another man who would strike "Jesus" with a wet cloth. Behind them were other men, each carrying the heavy horizontal member of a cross on their shoulders. Each of them were also being struck on their bare backs by a wet cloth, *hard*. They sometimes flinched in pain. There was also a dilapidated van in the front that blared sad sounding music from a clunky old speaker when the narrator wasn't speaking.

Onlookers jostled for position, some keeping pace as the procession moved forward. I'm sure there were in the crowd those whose mood was one of piety, some one of pietism, and still others who were there strictly for entertainment value. My mood was one of sorrow. I pondered the agony and humiliation that Jesus endured as He was crushed by the weight of the cross, dragging the instrument of His death through the streets, all the while being insulted and beaten. I also couldn't help but feel sorrow for some of the spectators. How many people were there who believed they would be saved by their own works? How many people were there whose mediator was Mary rather than Jesus?

On this Good Friday, as I run through the streets I also feel the crushing weight of my own sin. I feel the crushing weight of the *Law*. But even though it is Good Friday, I know that Easter Sunday is just around the corner. I stand at the foot of the cross, knowing that I will also stand at the entrance of the empty tomb. I know that my Savior carried the cross that I should have carried. He lifted the weight of sin off my shoulders and carried it to Golgatha, triumphing over the curse of the Law. This is the life of a Christian. Not one of continuous searching for ways to appease or please God, or one of rededicating your life to Jesus or taking your spiritual life to the "next level," but one of focusing on the cross. Like the sure foot-strikes of a runner's feet on pavement, a Christian's life is a rhythm of sorrow, repentance, forgiveness, joy, and love for his neighbor because of what Jesus has done for him. It is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

As we flew back to the States, I finished what I had started on Maundy Thursday. I described to my flying partner what Good Friday was all about. I didn't share the Gospel with him, only the Law. From our previous conversations, I knew he was a secure sinner – one who was unrepentant and didn't know the seriousness of his sin. Until he recognizes the depth of his depravity through the work of the Holy Spirit, he will never recognize his need for a Savior. I pray that one day soon, after he too has felt the crushing weight of the Law, that some other Christian will share with him the sweet message of the Gospel.

As Good Friday draws to a close, I rest comfortably in the arms of my Savior, trusting in God's promises. "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5).

It was, and is, a *good* Good Friday.

Written by [Scott Diekmann](#)

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