

Laudario 91
(R 268 2')

FADE under: We weep for that cruel kiss that caused God to be crucified for us. Judas the traitor came and kissed Him — what we do in love — but it brought Him great pain, for it was the way to suffering. They led him to Annas, stripped Him, beat Him, tied Him and made Him bleed.

"The kiss of Judas", from a cycle of old northern Italian religious folk-songs in honour of the Passion of Our Lord. ^{We're now within two weeks of Easter Day, with the celebration of Holy Week almost upon us} [Yesterday was Passion Sunday, or the 1st of passiontime, these last two weeks leading up to the feast of Easter]. It's a time of more intensive preparation for the great festival; but let's remember it is a preparation, and as we meditate and pray with Our Lord in His suffering and death, not to take the Passion as the whole purpose and end of our prayer with Him. It's His rising from death that we're preparing for — and we do so by trying to understand what He went through for our sakes, and why. We do so by going with Him, in prayer, through His sorrow and suffering and death, in order that we may be closer to Him in His resurrection and His new risen life He wants us to share with Him. This isn't make-believe. Our Lord's Passion and death took place a long time ago — the reason He had to suffer & die was the sinfulness and evil of mankind & the world in which we live; He chose to accept this because of His love for all of us, and because by doing so He would make it possible for us to share His Father's love; we want now to try to see the depth & breadth and height of His love which is the model and example for our own. And of course, in another sense, as Pascal wrote, Christ is in agony until the end of time — suffering now in His brethren, in His Church, in every Christian who is being

formed, growing in His likeness in the acceptance of God's love and will, in every man who suffers because the fullness of the redemption He brought us has not yet been manifested, in the transformation of all creation by God's love. In those weeks we want to savour what Christ has done for us — and how much He asks of us in response. It's not an easy task, and it needs concentration. That's why you may have noticed that all the statues and crucifixes in our churches are covered in a mourning purple during passiontime — a small thing, maybe, but symbolic & instructive. The one person who was closest to Jesus in His suffering & death as in all his life, was His mother, Mary. A sword pierced her mother's heart too. With her help and intercession we will keep watch, meditate and pray as we recall the story of Her Son's emptying Himself for love of us. In this hymn we seek to join with her in her sorrow as she stood by the cross of Christ — part of the Stabat Mater, by Poulenc.

Poulenc:
Stabat Mater III
(1934)

ANGELUS, PRAYERS.

In the 'Angelus' each day, we recall the announcement made by God to Mary, thro' the angel Gabriel, that she was to be the mother of Christ — and the concluding prayer of the Angelus puts us right in the centre of the Christian mystery which we're to celebrate next week especially, when we ask to be brought through the passion & death of Christ to the glory of His resurrection. That is, in fact, the prayer of tomorrow's Mass, 25th March, the Feast of the Annunciation. It's a feast of Our Lady; but also of Christ whose conception it marks, the beginning of His human life. So, in effect, at this time the whole suffering up

of Christ's life is presented for our reflection. And with Him, at both beginning and end is His mother who is now also ours. She knows Him best, and knows how much He loves each one of us, and what it cost Him in human terms to make us conscious of His love and able to respond to it in Faith and Hope & Charity. So tomorrow's feast fits well into this season. But there's no need to wait till tomorrow to meditate on Mary's ~~part~~^{role} in the passion of Her Son, or to ask her help in prayer to make this a fruitful passiontime for each of us. Already today, in the calendar of the Church, there is the commemoration of the archangel Gabriel, God's messenger, the angel of the annunciation. Nowadays angels aren't in great favour in popular devotion or among theologians — though we still recite, and speak about the "angelus", a word wh. comes from "angel", meaning Gabriel, who spoke to Mary. Perhaps today we ought to ask ourselves what of Gabriel means to us — or better still, to Mary who received the message of God about her motherhood. During our meditation on the passion of Christ next week, when we read the full gospel account, the same question, problem, will also face us when we come across the angel of the agony, strengthening Jesus in his dark hour in the garden. It may be difficult to understand, but there is a reality here we may not dismiss and which we ought to try to grasp for the insight it gives into the meaning & reality of what Christ suffered.