CALVARIO/KALVARIJA - ENGLISH

Living presentation of the Passion of Christ. Gorizia Nova Gorica capital of European culture.

June 2025.

1- Incipit - Ecce peccata mundi - Piazza Vittoria

Groups of 4 or 5 young people enter from various points of the square and will mime throughout the Passion symbolic actions representing the "sins" of the world (e.g. they fight simulating a war;

they viciously beat up a homeless man and leave him alone; they chase a scared little girl;

they throw rubbish on the ground; they tear flowers; they threaten the audience with evil words; they roll on the floor screaming and banging lids, running here and there creating chaos, etc.).

In the square centre the group named " Death" stands out, a woman in black with a skull raised in her hand.

Death's group of 4 has: 1) bow and arrows 2) sword 3) scale 4) scythe. The actions performed by the groups will open the rapresentation and will be repeated along nearly all the way, and will cease and transform from negative to positive in the last resurrection scene. The actions of the 4 groups can take place simultaneously or separately or in both options.

Meanwhile, the reason of the performance is stated in three languages, Italian, Slovenian and English.

READER 1 – *Calvary. (pause) The name comes from the latin for bald. It means "place of the skull". It's the translation from the Aramaic of Golgotha. This was the name of the rock that stood just outside the walls of Jerusalem. On that bald hill the Romans crucified the sentenced to death. And there Jesus was crucified.*

Calvary in a figurative sense indicates the set of pain, suffering and death of people, of communities, of all humanity.

Calvario/Podgora, the hill surrounding Gorizia, recalls the bloody battles of the first world war that caused the massacre of young Italian, Slovenian, German and Croatian soldiers.

If we represent the passion and death of Jesus here today it is not only to reflect on the mystery of pain, suffering, personal and collective death, caused by wars, by misfortunes, by illnesses, coming from quarrels, but also because Gorizia/Nova Gorica – as European city of culture - has proposed itself as the first step in a long journey built on conciliation, brotherhood and peace in all Europe and between people and nations. The path is difficult and painful, because the wounds that bleed between us are still very fresh. But if we give life here, today, to the Passion of Christ, we hope that life will overcome death. Peace will overcome war. Love will overcome hate.

Above all, with this Passion play we - first of all - make peace and conciliation. This representation, in fact, sees collaboration, presence and friendship between Europassion for Italy and the Slovenian Passions coordinated by that of Skojia Loka, intangible heritage Unesco, by the public administrations and associations of Gorizia/Nova Gorica and their territories, through the help of countless volunteers and friends.

2 - Gethsemane and Synedrion - Prefecture Garden and church of St. Ignazio

Death and its group put themselves at the head of the Sanhedrin's soldiers, with Judas (they have torches, swords and sticks) and go to the the Prefecture garden where Gethsemane is simulated with the apostles sleeping and Jesus praying.

When the soldiers of the Sanhedrin arrive, Jesus approaches Judas, but they also approach the apostles, a scuffle breaks out, with Peter wounding Malchus. The only phrase you hear is that of Jesus: “He who wounds by the sword perishes by the sword”.

Then the apostles flee away and Jesus is brought to the Sanhedrin. The group is preceded by a little boy – Marco – who runs and arrives in the square hiding, chased in vain by two guards.

During the act of handing Jesus over to the Sanhedrin, Caiaphas visibly gives Judas the 30 denarii. Between the two there is always Death. Judas goes away counting the money over and over again. He is suddenly surrounded by a group of figures in black, shouting, repeating and singing “Money Money! Money, money! Wall Street! Bank Bank! Business” throwing fake money in the air like confetti”

The members of the Sanhedrin are already arranged in a semicircle with Jesus placed in the centre. This is the final part of the religious process.

CAIFA – Did you hear, Nazzareno, what the two witnesses said? It's true that you want to destroy the Temple and to rebuild it in three days? How do you defend yourself against these accusations? (Jesus is silent). Don't you have anything to say? What don’t you answer? (Jesus is silent, Caiaphas becomes impatient). I beg you for the living God! Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God!

JESUS – You said it. Indeed, I tell you that soon you will see the son of man sitting on the right of the Almighty coming on the clouds of heaven!

CAIAPHAS – He blasphemed! Do we need more witnesses? You heard the blasphemy. What do you think?

SYNEDRION – He deserves death!

CAIFA – Take him out! (the guards take Jesus out of the Synedrion by pulling him and beating him, everybody shouts and they take him to Pilate).

3 - Pilate's Trial – Balcony of the Prefettura in Gorizia

PILATE – Are you the king of the Jews?

JESUS – My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my soldiers would have fought, so that I would not be handed over to you.

PILATE - So, are you king?

JESUS – Yes. I am king. Not of this earth.

PILATE - Your Jewish friends say that you want to be their Messiah, that is, their king. But is it true?

Are you their king? Don't you answer anything? Do you know that I have the power to free you or to crucify you?

JESUS – You would have no power if it were not given to you from above.

PILATE – (interdicted, then addressing the people) You have handed over this Jesus to me as a rebel.

I have examined him before you, but I have not found any of the faults of which you accuse him,

nothing that deserves death. I will give him a punishment and then I will set him free.

(Pilate turns and orders the centurion to take Jesus away. Jesus is stripped, scourged and crowned with thorns, mocked as king by the soldiers)

PILATE - (appears together with Barabbas) It is tradition, in the occasion of your Easter, for a prisoner chosen by the people, to be freed. (the centurion also takes Jesus out). Here's the man (whistles and shouts). Who do you want me to let free: Barabbas or Jesus known as the Christ?

TURBA – Barabbas! Barabbas! Barabbas!

PILATE – And what should I do with Jesus called the Christ?

TURBA – Let him be crucified!

PILATE – But what did he do wrong?

TURBA – Let him be crucified!

PILATE – Take him and crucify him yourself.

CAIAPHAS – Pilate, if you free Christ you make yourself an enemy of Caesar. Whoever makes himself king opposes Caesar.

PILATE – Shall I crucify your king?

CAIPHAS – We have no other king but Caesar.

TURBA – To death! To death!

PILATE (a servant comes on scene with a basin filled with water, Pilate washes his hands) - I am not guilty for the the blood of this honest man! (gives an order to a centurion who releases Barabbas. Barabbas runs away into the crowd and the centurion hands Jesus over to the soldiers to be crucified)

TURBA – To death! Crucify him!

4 - Via Crucis – Via Rastello up to the Castle

Jesus is loaded with the cross and together with the Roman soldiers he starts the Via Crucis developing seven stop stations .

First stop: two thieves are placed in front of Jesus representing all prisoners and also jails.

Second stop: Jesus meets Veronica among a clearly visible group of Red Cross volunteers, doctors and nurses. Veronica wipes the face of Christ and then follows the crowd.

Third stop: Jesus meets Judas. Judas makes his way through the crowd, sees the suffering Jesus, approaches the Chiefs and priests who chase him away. Judas throws the money at them and then runs off and hangs himself.

Fourth stop: the Cyrenean. Jesus falls yet again. Soldiers force a stranger to carry the cross.

Fifth stop: Le Pious Women. The women perform a crying song. They get closer to Christ, but they get rejected by the roman soldiers.

JESUS - Don't cry over me, but over your children!

Sixth stop: the little angels

Seventh STOP: Jesus meets his mother and the 3 Marys. Aside we see John and the Magdalene.

READERS – *We are all condemned to death. We will all die. The skull reminds us of this Calvary. Our own death, and the one of our loved ones, is a reality that we reject. Which we cannot understand and accept.*

Jesus's walk to the Calvary presents us with a fact even harsher than death. Calvary is synonymous of a life of never ending suffering, without mercy or relief, so yes, death is sometimes desired as liberation, peace, and end to pain. It is even harder when we feel abandoned by the loved ones and they forget us. We feel desperately alone.

But the most incomprehensible and unacceptable death is the one of children and innocent people, not due to natural causes, but through the hands of other human beings. The man who kills another man. The genocides of people, families, communities. Without fault. But the darkness of humanity is reached when a brother kills his brother. How many fratricidal wars are needed for the European Union to be formed? And how many wars do we still need to achieve a world of peace?

Once at the Castle, the usual actions of the crucifixion, stripping of Christ, are carried out: nailing, lifting of the three crosses. Death character, showing the skull, is next to the cross. The pious women with Mary under the cross, form a group. John and Magdalene are there, but slightly apart.

5 - Crucifixion and death - Hill and entrance to Gorizia castle

CAIAPHAS – If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!

ANNA – O Savior of the world, why don't you save yourself?

THIEF – Not just you, Christ! Save me too!

GOOD THIEF – Shut up! Don't you fear God? We receive the right punishment for what we did, but he didn't do anything wrong. (facing Jesus). Jesus, remember me when you will be in your kingdom.

JESUS - I tell you the truth: today you will be with me in heaven. (pause) I'm thirsty... (a Roman soldier holds a sponge soaked in vinegar and places it on a cane, close to Christ's mouth)

JESUS - Woman, here is your son. (pause) Son, here is your mother! (pause)

Mary is standing with the other women while John and Magdalene are near by.

Mary turns towards John and John turns towards Mary. They come together as a family under the cross.

JESUS – My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? (pause) Father! Father! In your hands

I leave my spirit! (dies)

Silence for a minute. All the actors stand still as if they were inside a living painting.

At the end of the fixed time, a very sweet music starts.

Longinus tears Christ's chest with his spear to verify that he is dead. The other soldiers break the legs of the two thieves.

We then proceed with the deposition from the cross, with the arrival of Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and their servants. Having been taken down from the cross, Jesus is placed in his mother's arms to be mourned. The other women clean and anoint Jesus’s body.

6 - Burial and wake. From the castle down to via Giustiniano - then turn onto Via Cappella to go down to Piazza Transalpina.

Christ is buried in the small church of Santo Spirito. The place will be used as an anointing stone and a procession will come out of the church bearing Christ's dead body. (if it is not possible to bear the body, a simulacrum will be used)

The bearers of Christ will be Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and their servants.

Behind - side by side - Mary and John (Mother and Son)

The other Pious Women, and Mary Magdalene.

In front, however, the little angels carring the symbols of the Passion lead the procession.

In front of everyone, goes the Death character with its symbolic group.

The other groups (black figures such as devils) run, jump and precede the procession, feasting because Death and Evil have triumphed. Traditional Holy Friday instruments can be used to create the chaotic climate.

They will go wild especially when the procession arrives in Piazza Transalpina.

When Christ's funeral procession arrives in the square, Mary and the other women kiss and touch Jesus's body for the last time, they cover him in the holy shrout.

Once the door is closed, everyone sadly leaves, except the black figures and the Roman soldiers.

The figures in black stop in scuptural positions showing their evil actions.

The roman soldiers guard Jesus's tomb.

In the centre stands the Death character, holding its four symbols.

Here goes a minute of stillness and absolute silence. All the lights go out.

Total darkness.

7 - Resurrection - Piazza Transalpina

At the loudest possible sound of thunder (like a firecracker bomb) Handel's Alleluia starts full volume (or another similar piece of music of power and resurrection).

If possible all the scene should last as long as the piece of music and end with it.

As many as possible powerful lights will be switched on in the square.

The doors of the station are thrown open and crowds of children come running out with olive branches in their hands, also carring flowers, colored ribbons, baskets of red eggs, focaccias, Gubane, Easter sweets.

The sweets will be distributed to the audience.

Blacks figures and soldiers will fall to the ground.

All those who were part of the Passion come running from all sides of the square.

Jesus - dressed in white - leaves the main entrance of the station and heads towards Death.

Death is petrified among its thugs.

He approaches Death and, aided by the little angels, Jesus takes off Death's black cloak, takes the skull out of his hand, while the little angels take away the symbols of death from the figures in black, and pile them up aside.

Dance circles are formed among all the people in the square , until a large circle is formed containing other circles.

Chists transforms death into life.

READERS – *In this story of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND LIFE have been revealed to us.*

The real truth is that we cannot make disappear nor can we avoid death, war, disease, pain, natural disasters, sorrows and worries. They cannot disappear, for the freedom of man to know and to do good and evil.

The real way is to move further from the old man made of the flesh, of profit, of violence, and of

injustices, to build the new humanity made of freedom, justice and brotherhood.

Real Life is about filling all our daily relationships, arts and crafts, sciences and knowledge with love, inside families and communities, cities and towns, people and nations.

So that the Kingdom of Evil will not win, but the Kingdom of justice, solidarity and harmony between human beings will grow forever.

MARY - The ultimate meaning of Calvary, of every Calvary, is not death, but life. Is love and in joy… and above all...

ALL - (in all languages) Peace! Peace! Peace!