

## Homily of Good Friday, Year B, 2024

Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1-19:42

The 40 days of the Lenten season reaches its climax today, the day of Jesus' crucifixion. Today has been a day of fasting, abstinence, prayer, and meditation on the agony and death of Jesus.

What is good about Good Friday when it was such a gloomy day that the innocent Son of God, Jesus Christ, was tortured and brutally executed by his crucifixion on the Cross? It is called 'good' because Jesus' passion, crucifixion, and death are for our salvation and, therefore, for our good. The goodness of Good Friday is expressed in 2 Timothy 1:10, "... our savior Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality..."

Good Friday is the only day of the year the Catholic Church does not celebrate the Eucharist. This is because Good Friday's ceremony is a commemoration of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which is the meaning of the Eucharistic celebration.

Why did Jesus have to suffer gruesomely to accomplish our salvation? Could not our salvation be achieved by some other way? Jesus' passion, crucifixion, and death is God's plan for humanity's salvation. God's plan for humanity's salvation is a mystery beyond human's full comprehension and clear explanation. The psalmist says, "Our God is in heaven and does whatever he wills" (Psalm 113:3). Jesus, in his humanity, did not, even, fully grasp the meaning of what he was going through. He prayed in Gethsemane, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39). And cried out while hanging on the Cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). But later, in his divinity, he cautioned the two men on their way to Emmaus, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:25-26).

When you do not understand your cross and you ask, "Why me?" Jesus went through such an experience. May be, we will understand someday. May be, we will never understand. All is in God's hands! There is power and freedom in trusting all things in God's hand. Jeremiah 17:7-8 says, "Blessed are those who trust in the Lord; the Lord will be their trust. They are like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: It does not fear heat when it comes, its leaves stay green; in the year of drought it shows no distress, but still produces fruit."

Many times, we condemn those God used to bring to fulfillment of the prophecy about our salvation; such as Judas who betrayed him; the soldiers who arrested him, tortured him, and crucified him; the disciples who deserted him; the chief priests and the people who accused him falsely and insisted that he must die; Pilate who sentenced him to death and so on. How could our salvation have been possible without all these people? Every one of them played a role in God's salvation plan for us. God uses what we consider unfavorable for our good. Also, let us not be quick to condemn others, especially when we do not have all the information.

One of the lessons of Jesus' passion, crucifixion, death, and resurrection is that our difficulties and sufferings may be God's plan for something good and great to come our way. We hear it often said that stumbling blocks are stepping stones to success. Let us view our stumbling blocks with the eyes of faith so that we may see the hand of God. The goodness of Good Friday is that the death and burial of Jesus are not the end of the story. His resurrection is. Therefore, let us pray and look forward to our own resurrection story.

We identify with the Passion of Christ as we all carry our various crosses. Some of us have fallen several times under the weight of our crosses. Some of us are praying that our crosses be removed. Some of us are feeling as if we are hanging and abandoned on the cross. Some of us are feeling like being offered vinegar to drink for our thirst. As we venerate the crucifix, we pray with Jesus, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

God did not abandon the Israelites when they sinned and were attacked by ferocious snakes. He directed Moses to mold a bronze serpent and place it on a pole, so that "anyone who was bitten by a snake could look at the bronze snake and be healed" (Numbers 21:9). If the bronze serpent gave healing, how much more we will receive healing by venerating the crucifix. Jesus promises us, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (John 12:32). "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day" (John 6:40).

The message of the cross means nothing to a lot of people, but to us, it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18). As we venerate the crucifix today, may we experience the saving and healing power of God. Amen.

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