

Homily of Good Friday, 2026

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, and prayer. It has been a day of meditation on the agony and death of Jesus Christ. 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 Eucharistic celebration.

In the Bible, we read of 40 days of rain (Noah), 40 years of wilderness (Israelites), and 40 days at Mount Sinai (Moses and Elijah), 40 days in the desert (Jesus), 40 days of Lent; what does 40 mean? The number 40 signifies a period of testing, trial, preparation, and of cleansing leading to new beginnings.

What is good about Good Friday meanwhile it is a somber day, the innocent Son of God was tortured and brutally executed by his crucifixion on the Cross? In the first reading, Isaiah explains why Good Friday is good, "... it was our infirmities that he bore, our suffering that he endured ... he was pierced for our offences, crushed for our sins." "... upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed." "... because he surrendered to death ... he shall take away the sins of many, and win pardon for their offenses." Jesus himself says that it was necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory (Luke 24:25-26).

In the second reading from Hebrews, we are reminded that we have an important part to play to merit the 'good,' "...and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. It is very clearly stated. The 'good' is for those who obey him!

Why did Jesus have to suffer in a gruesome manner to accomplish our salvation? God's plan for humanity's salvation is a mystery beyond human's full comprehension and clear understanding. The psalmist says, "Our God is in heaven and does as he wishes" (Psalm 113:3).

Jesus 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 he cried out while hanging on the Cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

When you do not understand your cross, and you ask, "Why me?" Look at the Crucifix. As we contemplate and venerate the Crucifix today, may we draw strength and courage from it. May we be empowered by it to carry our own crosses with hope. May our crosses become bridges to safety and ladders to heaven. The message of the cross means nothing to a lot of people, but to us, it is God's power (1 Corinthians 1:18). Through our crosses, may we enter into glory as it was for Jesus.

Yes, we do condemn Judas who betrayed Jesus; 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; the soldier who gave him vinegar to drink; the soldier who pierced his side; and so on. But how could our salvation have been possible without the role these people played? Many times, good comes out from the worst. The 'good' of Good Friday is that the death and burial of Jesus are not the end of the story. His resurrection is. Let us cling to the old rugged Cross, it will someday be exchanged for a crown! Amen.

On our own part, let us be like Pontius Pilate's wife who do not support evil; like Simon of Cyrene, an instrument of relief to the suffering; like Veronica, an instrument of empathy and consolation to the grieving; like daughters of Jerusalem, who weep over evil; like Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary of Magdala, who offer ministry of presence to the distressed and the grieving; like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who do works of mercy.

We identify with the Passion of Christ as we all carry our various crosses. Some of us are praying that our crosses be removed. Some of us have fallen several times under the weight of our crosses. Some of us are feeling as if we are hanging and abandoned on our crosses. Some of us are feeling as if we are offered vinegar to drink for our thirst. Some of us are feeling crushed by all kinds of infirmity. As we venerate the Cross, we pray with Jesus, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). The second reading encourages us to "confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help" (Hebrews 4:16). Jesus promises us, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (John 12:32). Draw us to yourself, O Lord, that by your stripes we are healed. Amen.

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