

Homily of Good Friday, 2025

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.

What is good about Good Friday? Being such a gloomy day, the innocent Son of God 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.

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.

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 understanding. The psalmist says, "Our God is in heaven and does whatever he wills" (Psalm 113:3). Jesus 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).

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 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?" May be, we will understand someday. May be, we will never understand. All are in God's hand! As we contemplate and venerate the Cross 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 of safety and ladders of heaven. Amen. 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).

Many times, we condemn those God used to bring to fulfillment the prophecies 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. Many times, God uses what we consider unfavorable for our good.

The goodness of Good Friday is that the death and burial of Jesus are not the end of the story. His resurrection is. No matter our malefactors: the Judas, those who desert us, our false accusers, the Pilate, the jeering crowd, and the soldiers, let us pray and look forward to our own resurrection testimony. Cling to the old rugged Cross. It will one day be changed for a crown!

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 like we are offered vinegar to drink for our thirst. Some of us, as Prophet Isaiah states in the first reading, are crushed in 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).

On our own part, let us be like Pontius Pilate’s wife who did not support evil. Let us become instruments of relief like Simon of Cyrene to those who are suffering. Let us become instruments of empathy and consolation like Veronica. Let us not be silent but weep over evil like daughters of Jerusalem. Let us support the distressed and the grieving like Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary of Magdala. Let us not relent in corporal works of mercy like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

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 Cross? Jesus promises us, “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself” (John 12:32). Prophet Isaiah prays for us in the first reading, “... by his stripes we are healed.” Amen.

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