

Homily – Good Friday C

Who would believe what we have heard? To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? My dear friends, today we behold the love of God in the greatest possible way. Yes! Who would believe what we have heard? Who would have believed that God would not only become man but also die for us? This is why we must be humble in our relationship with God. Think about it! If we had the opportunity to propose to God possible options He could have adopted in order to save us, would it have ever occurred to us to request God to die for us? Not at all! Yet, as Isaiah so rightly prophesied in our First Reading (Is. 52:13 - 53:12)

It was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured.... he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins; upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; but the LORD laid upon him the guilt of us all.

This is why St. Augustine says, “What God promises us in future is great, but what he has done already is greater.” What a splendid love! As St. Paul declared, “God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). God loves us more than we can ever understand. Hence, our Second Reading (Heb. 4:14-16; 5:7-9) exhorts us never to despair. Why? In Jesus, the Son of God, “We have a great high priest who is able “to sympathize with our weaknesses.... So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.”

Today, as we behold Jesus on the Wood of the Cross, let us reflect on the abundant mercy and love God has lavished on us. Let us see the Cross of Jesus as a victory, not a defeat. It is a victory over evil in all its forms. It is the mighty hand of the Father in action. As Jesus indicated when he said to Peter in our Gospel passage (Jn. 18:1 - 19:42), “Put your sword into its scabbard. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father gave me?” I remember a friend who lost his father after praying at length that God should heal his father. He became furious and asked me, “Reverend, if God exists, why did He not heal my sick father? Where is He?” I could hear God respond, “I’m in the same place I was when my only begotten Son

died on the Cross.” Beloved Jesus has changed the meaning of death. It is no longer punishment for sins; in Christ, it is the passage to immortality.

Certainly, the challenges of life could make us forget the love of God. Peter denied Jesus. We too have declared, “I am not his disciple”, “I don’t know him.” We do this each time we were afraid to speak the truth or profess our faith publicly. Jesus declares, “Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” Are we ready to listen to his voice? Let us not be like the crowd who denied him saying, “Not this one but Barabbas!” Let us not choose a murderer and crucify the King of glory. Let us not betray Jesus and his Church by making false choices and submitting to the forces of secularism and liberalism. Let us not be like those soldiers who placed “a crown out of thorns ... on his head, and clothed him in a purple cloak ... and said [in mockery], “Hail, King of the Jews!” Let us not be like the ungrateful crowd who received many favors from Jesus and still yelled, “Crucify him, crucify him!”

Finally, as we venerate the symbol of Christ’s Cross today, let us approach him with a heartfelt love. Let it be an opportunity for repentance and reconciliation. Try to imagine how you would have loved Jesus sincerely if you had been there and shared the sentiments of the women who accompanied him to Calvary. Embrace him with the same passionate love with which Mary, his Mother, beheld him on the Cross, with the same zeal which led John the beloved apostle to defy all the odds to remain with him. Let no one venerate the Cross with scorn; let no one approach this mystery with shame and disgust. Look beyond the physical expression the Church gives us and enter into the mystery itself. It is not idolatry. It is not comparable to the “molten calf” in the desert or the idols of pagan nations. It is comparable rather to the “Ark of the Covenant”, to the “Rod of Moses”, to the “Bronze Serpent Moses lifted on a stand”. It is the symbol of our victory that Jesus gave to us when he declared, “When I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32).