

FR. JOHN'S HOMILY
Good Friday, April 15, 2022

What is Good about the evil, darkness and ugliness of this Friday? We can only ponder the pain and the suffering that Jesus experienced upon this day 2000 years ago. Thinking about Jesus' Passion, suffering, and death can only be taken in short moments. It's like when I watch the news about the war in Ukraine and I see the suffering on the faces of the people. I hear their voices, see the dead bodies, and I can only take so much before I change the station, or turn off the TV. The suffering is too much. I can only imagine what the crucifixion was like. Mel Gibson's, the Passion give us some Idea of what Jesus would have suffered on this day, 2000 years ago, it is hard to watch and sit through, and this is Good.

We need to not only hear what happened to Him, we need to think about it and let it enter our hearts. As difficult as this may be, we need to sit and ponder the depth of God' love this night. Why, you may ask? Because if we water-down the crucifixion we also water-down the resurrection. In order to get the full measure of how much God loves us, we need to enter fully into the details of this Friday, it is not what but **who** that makes it Good.

Think about the Roman means of execution, crucifixion. The Romans were professionals at crucifixions; they did them by the thousands. Jesus was sentenced to die by the Roman courts, therefore He was sentenced to die by crucifixion outside the city walls of Jerusalem. One more crucifixion wouldn't bother the soldiers. It was all in a day's work for them. Therefore, as happened at other Roman crucifixions, the Roman soldiers whipped Jesus.

We know from history books that those crucified received thirty-nine lashes across their backs. If you can imagine a man's back that has been whipped or lashed thirty nine times, it is not a pretty sight. The whips used were instruments of torture. Jesus was then given a long wooden bar, about six feet long, that he was given to carry to Golgotha. The vertical post was stuck in the ground waiting for Jesus at the site. The person being executed would carry the six-foot board which would be attached to the top of the vertical wooden pole stuck in the ground to form the cross. The walk through the crowds had to be humiliating, and in His weakened, badly whipped body, Jesus would slowly carry that top piece of the cross to the place of His execution. Jesus was so exhausted by the pain that Simon of Cyrene was picked from the crowd to carry the cross-piece for him. And while Jesus painfully walked to his death, with a crown of thorns on his head and his

purple robe wrapped around him, he was being mocked, spit on, struck and cursed at. How could He endure so much suffering and pain?

Remember Jesus was the innocent lamb. He didn't deserve this punishment, yet he willingly took it upon himself for us. Even the Roman Centurion, an expert in crucifixion, would proclaim at the end, truly this was the Son of God. Because he knew no mere man could endure such pain. The humiliation continued as they placed an inscription on the cross saying, "King of the Jews." The humiliation continued even further as they stripped him naked before they tied him to the cross and drove the nails through his wrists and feet into the wood.

Jesus was fully human and divine. Yes, He is the Son of God, but He would have experienced fully the pain on this day we call Good Friday. John says, the words of Jesus, "I am thirsty" revealed Jesus' humanity. Again we can only imagine the depth of Jesus' thirst, not just physical, but the depth of His heart for all humanity. He thirsted for us all, He thirsted for all souls.

On this day of Good Friday, we stress Jesus' humanity. On this day we don't hide from what He went through for each and every one of us. On this day, we focus on his words from the cross.... "I am thirsty." And then Jesus says, "It is finished."

Jesus' last words, makes it perfectly clear, we can never doubt the depth, height, width of God's love for us. The last words of Jesus were not spoken in defeat. They were not the words of a man dying without a cause. "It is finished!" is a completion of a mission and a higher purpose for all humanity. In John's view, these words of Christ were spoken in triumph from the cross and were meant to be his signal of victory to the entire world and to everyone. "It is finished." Your sins are forgiven. It is the who which makes this Friday Good.

Behold is a word that means to ponder, to be in wonder and in awe, impressed, mostly in reference to Beauty and Goodness. Pilate: Behold, the Man. Behold, your king. Jesus is Beauty and Goodness to Behold.

Jesus: Behold your Son. Behold your Mother. The Beauty and Goodness of Mary's love and Jesus gift to us the body of believers to receive such a gift, Mary.

Church: Behold the wood of the cross, on which hung the salvation of the World. Come let us Adore. Yes, we are called to Adore the Beauty and Goodness of the Holy Cross.