

Good Friday

Today, we stand at the foot of the Cross. On this Good Friday, the Church is quiet. The altars are bare, the lights are dimmed, and our hearts are heavy. We have just heard the long account of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John. It is a story of betrayal, pain, and ultimate sacrifice. But above all, it is the greatest love story ever told.

In our first reading from the prophet Isaiah, we encounter the "Suffering Servant." Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, Isaiah described a man who would be "despised and rejected." He was a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity. Isaiah tells us a profound truth: "But he was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity." When we look at the crucifix, we do not just see a man who was a victim of a cruel Roman execution. We see the One who took our place. Every lie we have told, every moment of pride, and every act of selfishness was laid upon His shoulders. He took the weight of the world's darkness so that we could walk in the light. He remained silent before His accusers because His love spoke louder than any words could.

The letter to the Hebrews reminds us that we do not have a God who is distant or detached from our human struggle. We have a High Priest who is able to "sympathize with our weaknesses." Jesus knows what it feels like to be lonely. He knows the sting of being betrayed by a friend. He knows the physical pain of a body that is breaking and the mental anguish of feeling abandoned. Because He suffered, He can walk with us in our suffering. When you feel like life is too hard to bear, look at the Cross. It is the bridge between heaven and earth. Through His wounds, He has opened a way for us to "approach the throne of grace with confidence." You are never alone in your pain because He has been there before you.

In the Gospel of John, the death of Jesus is not a defeat; it is a victory. Throughout the Passion, Jesus is in control. He is the King who wears a crown of thorns. Even from the Cross, He is thinking of others—He gives His mother to John, and John to His mother. He ensures that love continues even in the face of death. When Jesus says, "It is finished," He does not mean "I am defeated." He means that the work of salvation is complete. The debt is paid. The gates of Paradise are being unlocked. The veil of the temple was torn in two, signifying that there is no longer a barrier between God and His children.

So, how do we respond to such a great love? On Good Friday, we do not just remember a historical event. We encounter a living Person. When we come forward to venerate the Cross today, we are not just kissing a piece of wood. We are saying "Thank you" to the Savior who loved us to the very end. Take a moment to think about the burdens you are carrying today. Maybe it is a sickness, a broken relationship, or a secret sin that makes you feel ashamed. Bring those burdens to the foot of the Cross. Leave them there. Jesus did not die so that you would stay in chains; He died to set you free.

The Cross is the place where God's justice and God's mercy meet. It is the ultimate "I love you" written in blood. As we sit in the silence of this day, let us let that love soak into our hearts. Let us resolve to live lives that reflect the sacrifice we celebrate. If He loved us this much, we must surely learn to love one another. Today, we mourn, but we do not mourn without hope. We know that the tomb will not stay closed. But for now, we wait. We stay with Him. We watch. We pray.

Behold the wood of the Cross, on which hung the salvation of the world.