

04/07/2023. Good Friday

Is.50:4-7; Phil.2:6-11; Mtt.26:14—27:66

Blood is life-giving; it is the essential element in sustaining us in life. Babies in the womb receive oxygen and nutrients from their mothers' blood. When natural disasters occur the Red Cross appeals for blood donors. In many cultures the bonding of people is sealed in rituals that mingle blood and has a deeply religious significance. As we enter into Holy Week, blood and the cup of suffering are the centerpiece of God's saving and life-giving actions.

On Mt. Sinai, when God bound Himself to His people, Moses offered animal sacrifices, then took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." Moses then took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."(Ex.24:6-8)

We wear red today because it signals the blood of martyrs; and Jesus is the greatest martyr. "It was the best of times and the worst of times" is how Charles Dickens opens his book. The Gospel is an account of Jesus being both at his best and worst. The worst part is his sense of having been stripped of his dignity and purpose, his companions abandon him, and his sense of his father's abiding care seems to be gone.

The best of times for Jesus is his staying faithful to whom he knows he is. We see in Jesus like the ultimate cleansing filter, he purifies life itself. He takes in all hates, injustice, bias and all the sins holds them, transforms them and gives back love and forgiveness. Perhaps that is the central characteristic of a hero. We are encouraged in this liturgy to take up our heroic lives, becoming servants of the Word and love. Therefore, Good Friday is all about the transforming power of suffering love. Jesus took away sin by absorbing and transforming our sins. How? Like, a water filter takes in impure water, holds the impurities inside of it and gives back only pure water. It transforms rather than transmits.

In the same way today the whole world is going through the worst part of human life with terrific political, social, family and religious issues. Everyone in the world and our own parish is in isolation. Our families are now spread far and wide. Many people are not able to reach out their own family

members and friends in their need like Jesus' companions abandoned him. We are not able to come together as a community and worshipers of true God. But in the midst of all this current crisis I could feel and see the best of the situation. Many are growing very strong in their faith. The broken families are trying to reconcile with one another and come together. More and more people are feeling the presence of God in the midst of this chaotic situation. Therefore, let us feel the best of current situation that Christ stands before us as our savior and the one who gives life.

Jesus gave us His body and blood, not only on the cross, but also in the most holy Eucharist, which is really, truly, and substantially His body, blood, soul, and divinity. In the blood of Christ which flowed from His crucified body we are liberated from the ultimate consequences of our sins if we follow in the way of Peter and not in the way of Judas. God offers, we respond, and everything depends upon our response.

The Jewish leaders accepted responsibility saying "His death is upon us and upon our children,". What about us? How will we respond to Him? The harsh truth is that millions of innocent people suffer. Jesus Christ, God's own Son, was innocent and unjustly suffered terrible rejection and pain. Instead of allowing himself to be imprisoned in resentment and hatred, he walked the path leading to redemption and resurrection. When we drink of the cup, the cup of suffering, we have our own opportunity to drink of God's life-giving force that empowers us to face this world's unfairness and injustices.

Good Friday was not a Friday that happened some 2000yrs ago. Good Friday is today and every day when we remember with gratitude Jesus' personal love for us and respond to his love by living a good life that overflows into love of others. Jesus doesn't want admirers but imitators. He does not want fans but followers. Therefore, let us make today's Good Friday really and truly good by being good and faithful and doing good. **Amen.**