

Good Friday

Are we willing to share in the suffering of Jesus? Are we willing to be his true friend? If we are not, how can we hope to share in his glory? Jesus called his Apostles to be his closest friends to walk with him. To walk with him in his ministry. To walk with him in seeing and experiencing the miracles of God. To walk with him in learning the Truth that is to be believed and proclaimed in order to save our souls. And, Jesus called his closest friends to be with him during his darkest hours. To wait and pray with him in his agony in the garden when he cried out to his Father. To witness his arrest. To see the man they loved be scourged and mocked. To see the friend they loved be crucified on a cross. To see their friend be killed by the very people he came to love in this world. Why? Why did he choose these men to love and knowingly lead them to experience in his suffering? Why did he choose these men to experience their own suffering because of their friend? Why did he choose each of us?

Let us turn back for a minute to the Transfiguration of our Lord. The Transfiguration when Jesus brought his closest friends, Peter, James and John, up on a mountain to reveal his glory to them. Jesus did this with the hope that these closest friends would follow him up the mountain to his crucifixion. Jesus wanted his friends to share in his crucifixion because suffering unites friends in a way that nothing else can. Soldiers in battle become a lifelong band of brothers and sisters, not because they suffered, but because they suffered together. Jesus' closest friends on that mountain would be led to share in the suffering of Jesus in his Passion and death, and eventually be united to Jesus in their own martyrdoms after Jesus rose from the dead. That is what it means to unite our suffering to Jesus Christ. That is what it means to unite the essence of our very life to the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus is willing to share in our suffering and in the very depths of our lives because he is our truest friend.

So, I ask again: Are we willing to share in the suffering of Jesus? Are we willing to be his true friend? -- to be his disciple? Hans Urs Von Balthasar, one of the great theologians and priests of the 20th Century,

said: “It is to the cross that the Christian is challenged to follow his Master: No path of redemption can make a detour around it.” Today we are called to that cross – to experience the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and to venerate that cross on which he died for us. Experiencing the Passion of Christ is what today is about. To enter into that moment of Jesus’ suffering and death, and to embrace the cross in which we nailed the Son of God to is why we are here. To realize how the cross is part of our lives, and to especially realize the gift Jesus Christ gave to us in being nailed to that cross that would change our lives forever.

Pope Francis said that “Each encounter with Jesus changes our life.” There is no greater encounter than what we experience in Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection – in the gift of his body and blood given up for each of us, and given to us to sustain, to nourish and to save us.

If we reflect on the many people we heard about in today’s reading of the Passion we can see a part of ourselves in each of them if we are truly honest in how we live our life. In how we live our life with our strengths and gifts of our faith. And, in how we live our life with our weaknesses. We are every character in the story of the passion and death of Christ. And I think that’s the whole point. Why wouldn’t every dimension of the human heart be represented in the greatest story of all time? It only makes sense because the story is timeless. We have to apply it to our lives today because the reality of its events matter today.” We should take time today to acknowledge when we are like the disciple sleeping in the Garden of Gethsemane and not being attentive to Christ in our lives, when we are like Caiaphas wanting Christ to prove himself to us, when we are like Peter denying Christ in our lives by our actions, when we are like Barabbas chained to sin and holed up in the prison of our own pride, or when we are like the passer-by mocking Jesus when we forget all the good he has given to us. But, we should also take time today to acknowledge and celebrate when we are like the Centurion opening our eyes to the Truth of Jesus in our life, when we are like the women standing by the cross opening ourselves to God’s grace by being a faithful Christian in the midst of pain and suffering, when we are like Joseph of Arimathea, that by God’s grace, are selflessly compassionate and put others’ needs before our own, and

when we are like the disciples, proclaiming and living out our faith to be the face of Christ in this world.

St. Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria in the 4th Century, said “Jesus became what we are so that he might make us what he is.” Let us be willing to share in the suffering of Jesus. Let us be willing to be Jesus’ true friend by seeking to be who he has called each of us to be in this world. Let us embrace the cross today and be true and faithful disciples of the Lord. If we do, we then share in his glory today, and we share in the beautiful hope to share in his eternal glory. Amen!