
Good Friday 2020

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, Good Friday marks the end of the holy season of Lent. Usually when we come to the end of a season, it calls for a celebration. But the end of the Great Fast leads to Calvary, crucifixion and death. So, let us wait until Sunday, the day of the Resurrection to celebrate.

One week ago, our Lord was looking forward to entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday with but one purpose in mind. He knew the ride on his donkey would lead to his death. Yet, His action was one of supreme courage, humility and the greatest of all Divine virtues, love.

As He neared the city, He imagined the thousands of Gentiles who would believe in him and would reap the fruit of His sacrifice. He visualized the great Christian community which would embrace all peoples of every nation in every age until the end of time.

But the scene then changed in Jerusalem just after his triumphal entry on Palm Sunday. Now the time of his passion and death was at hand, and in his farewell benediction he foretold the great community which would be the fruit of his death. He likened his looming death to a seed planted in the earth. As the seed is sacrificed to produce the germ of life, his life would be sacrificed that men may live. He calls this His moment of glory because the Christian community would arise with him to reign with Him forever. This community would be catholic, extending to the farthest reaches of the earth.

During the ordeal of his passion and death our Lord was like all humans. He was deeply troubled as He imagined the sequence of his suffering. He too, had, a true human nature in no way changed by its union with his Divine nature. So, the Son of Man shuddered as He approached the cross, and even begged His Heavenly Father to spare him the dreaded ordeal. But in order to suffer and die for mankind, it was necessary for Him to overcome those natural feelings of his true human nature.

In continuing his farewell address, He speaks of Himself as the light of the world. He appeals directly to His followers and tells them of the glorious reward that follows for such faith. Belief in Him will make them sons of light, symbolically, since God has given no better gift to man than light. The life of all nature requires light. When the sun comes up in the morning all nature welcomes it with gladness. This light is the symbol of the light of the supernatural world, where there is no night, and no death. And that is a good thing!

So, Good Friday is "good" because of its redemptive aspect. The mortal life of Christ ends not in tragedy, but in sacrifice, and sacrifice is the supreme act of love. It is good because this sacrifice repairs alienation and estrangement from God. Since man could offer nothing, God would offer his Son. It is good because it gives us a clear perspective of the wretchedness of our human condition. Now we see the tyranny of our lower nature, and we are tired of the empty pleasures and disappointments these pleasures bring. We are troubled by the uneasiness in our souls, our helplessness; and death frightens us. It is good because it gives us hope and assurance. Redemption is now within our reach, although this reach requires effort. It is good because this was the only way we could see ourselves as we are, and despite our sins, we still hope for mercy and forgiveness. And even though there is no horror comparable to death, "Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Cor. 15:55)

If we were there, standing in front of the cross and asked the dying Christ, "Why are you allowing all this to happen to you?", the last thing He'd likely say would be: "Because you are sinful!" Rather,

He would seem to be saying, "Because I loved you!" Everything uttered when reaching his last breath added up to that: "Because I loved." That's what His cross is all about, much more than sin. It is all about the extent God would go to tell us again and again, "Loving you is not just what I do. It is who I am. I love you into life. I will love you unto death."

Amen!