

# GOOD FRIDAY 2020

*Reflection (John 18:1-19:42)*

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Good Friday is the day on which Catholics commemorate the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Catholics are joined by almost all other Christians in solemn commemoration on this day. It is also a legal holiday around much of the world. However, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, with the rule of social distancing, this year we cannot have our holidays as usual.

The story of the passion of Jesus doesn't end with the Crucifixion. According to Christian traditions, Christ rose from the grave three days later, triumphing over death and in so doing forgiving all believers of their sins. That's what Christians celebrate at Easter. So, Good Friday is only good because we know how the story ends. It ends with the forgiveness of sin and promise of eternal salvation. Without the Crucifixion, there is no resurrection. Without the sacrifice of Christ, there is no salvation. Without Good Friday, there is no Easter.

As the passion narrative begins, Jesus shows his usual concern for his disciples. He requests that those arresting him allow his disciples to go. Before returning to his Father, Jesus was still worried and concerned about his faithful disciples. He feared that his disciples would suffer, be persecuted, and killed because of his sake. Joseph Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago is one who offers an example of a true disciple of Jesus. When he was dying of cancer, he began visiting cancer victims. He claimed that before he did this, he was thinking of himself and his own sickness, but once he began to visit those dying of the dreaded disease, he found himself thinking less of himself and more of others. When we are sick or have personal struggles, we tend to spend most of our time thinking about ourselves and our own suffering, but Jesus reaches out and challenges us to follow his example.

Through the passion of Jesus, we learn some things about the three times of Denials of Peter. We learn the mercy and forgiveness of Jesus for him and for all of us. After Peter's Denials, the passion of Jesus now becomes a passion for Peter, who must watch his close friend die after denying him, a friend he had come to believe was the Christ. After Jesus' resurrection, we meet the new Peter, one who is truly ready to die for Jesus, and eventually does. In our lives, sometimes we may be weak and deny Christ in some way, but Peter shows us that no matter how far we fall, we can still become a staunch and faithful follower of Jesus. Peter teaches us that it is never too late to turn back to Christ and become a totally dedicated disciple. God's forgiveness and mercy are greater than our sins.

We can learn some lessons in the Trial of Jesus before Pilate. Jesus' passion was an hour of darkness. In the midst of our own, the light of Christ still illuminates our lives. Jesus, the king of creation, brings us

salvation through his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. We all experience dark moments, but Jesus urges us to remain faithful, as he did. In his darkest moments, Jesus is still the Light of the World. He wants all of us to become the light of the world as well: in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Mt 5, 14-16)

Today, on Good Friday, the Church worships and venerates the Mystery of the Cross. We celebrated the Good Friday service in our church, Sacred Heart. Before going to the church in Diamond Creek to celebrate the Good Friday service this morning, I read the article written by Dr Paul Taylor who reflects on the Stations of the Cross as one of Catholicism's most identifiable traditions in Melbourne Catholic on Wednesday 8 April 2020: *"The Stations or Way of the Cross are one of the most traditional and identifiable devotional practices in Catholicism, whereby the faithful are invited to focus their prayer and contemplation on the fourteen steps in Christ's suffering and death (and, in more recent versions, Christ's resurrection from the dead). The devotional practice can be traced back to the practices of early Christian pilgrims who visited the various historical sites (sometimes known as the 'Via Dolorosa') in Jerusalem that came to be associated with Christ's suffering and death. These pilgrimages began in the early Patristic period and continued throughout the Middle Ages. For the benefit of those Christians who could not make these often demanding pilgrimages, local churches produced their own versions of the stations in order to bring the practice closer to home."*... And he adds: *"The power of the Cross and Resurrection is God's love, which acts 'with God before the world was', in the creation and direction of the world, before the incarnation, during the incarnation, before the sacrifice on the Cross, during the sacrifice on the Cross and after it."*

Meditating on the Passion of Jesus and the Mystery of the Cross and thinking about our sufferings and sickness, I learnt some new lessons from someone who wrote about the Purposes of Suffering:

There is no doubt that we sometimes suffer as the result of our own sins. But much of the suffering we experience in life is due to other reasons.

- We suffer because we live in a fallen world corrupted by the sin of Man.
- We suffer because suffering refines us in righteousness.
- We suffer because suffering restrains us from falling in love with evil in the world and therefore helps us to maintain an eternal perspective, reminding us that we are to be aliens and strangers passing through this world to a better life in a new & perfected world.

- We suffer because suffering motivates us to lean hard upon the Lord, trusting in Him as we have never done before.
- We suffer because the faith we demonstrate in the midst of suffering brings honour and glory to God.
- And, yes, we suffer for purposes known only to God Himself.

God never promises that the righteous will not suffer. But what He does promise regarding suffering is something glorious.

He promises that He will walk through the suffering with us and give us the grace and strength to deal with it victoriously. In Psalm 23 He says: *“I will walk with you through the valley of the shadow of death.”* In Isaiah 43 He says: *“I will pass with you through the high waters and will walk with you through the fire.”*

If my friend could speak to us now, I'm certain she would testify that God was faithful to these promises in her own life.

As John Paul II observes, *“the purpose of suffering is to effect a conversion, that is, to build up good in the subject, so that in the call to repentance he may discover the Mercy of God. The purpose of repentance is to overcome the evil that lurks in various forms in the heart of man, and also to strengthen the good not only in him but also in his relations with others, and especially with God”* (Salvific doloris, 12).

Celebrating Good Friday, I would like to ask all of you pray to God the Father almighty, that he may cleanse the world of all errors, banish disease – the Coronavirus pandemic – a new disease that we have never been seen before on this planet, drive out hunger, unlock prisons, loosen fetters, granting to all people at home in this changing time, safety, health to the sick – the victims of Coronavirus, and salvation to the dying.

Remember that, Christ's sacrifice on the Cross on Golgotha, which is closely linked with Christ's Resurrection, is the central point of the teaching and life of the Church. In fact we speak of the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, which refers to Christ's victory over sin, the devil and death. Amen.

***Good Friday and Happy Easter to all!***