

Homily
Good Friday
April 18, 2025

“He surrendered himself to death...and he shall take away the sins of many and win pardon for their offenses.” Even hundreds of years before Jesus walked the earth, the prophet Isaiah could see a redeemer on the horizon, one who would suffer for us and bear the guilt that we could not bear ourselves. But even Isaiah could not have known what this would all mean, or the incredible way that this prophecy would be fulfilled, that God would become man and die on a cross.

Peter and the Twelve knew this prophecy, and they heard Jesus speak of it too. And yet, it’s pretty clear that Peter and the others were utterly devastated by the death of Jesus. They had all run away and hidden, except John who remained with Mary at the cross. But the rest fled the scene, and I’m guessing that their hopes must have been completely shattered. Jesus was gone, executed by his enemies, dead and buried. To them, it must have seemed like the absolute end, that all hope was lost. Even the disciples on the way to Emmaus said it: “We were hoping that he would be the one...” Now hope was gone.

But those disciples didn’t know what we know. They didn’t get that Jesus willed all of this. His enemies didn’t take him against his will, he chose to hand himself over, and he chose to make a sacrifice of his own life. He foretold this, he warned them what would happen, that he would be handed over to his enemies and crucified, but they didn’t understand, and they ran away because they had lost all hope. And we can’t really blame them; we might have felt the same way. But today, my friends, we are able to see these events in a different way. We know that Jesus accepted this sentence of death to fulfill God’s plan, to pay the price for our sins – all sins – and to reconcile all of humanity with God. Yes, he was filled with sorrow in the garden, yes he recoiled from the suffering that lay ahead, but he didn’t run from it or fight it. He embraced it as an act of love, the greatest love the world has ever known. Yes, he truly suffered on the cross, it wasn’t just an act or an appearance. He felt the scourging and the nails, he experienced not only physical pain but an even deeper spiritual pain, the pain of bearing our sins on his soul. But he said yes to all of this for one reason and one reason only: his love for each one of us, his desire to save us and to bring us back to God.

To most of the disciples, in that moment all hope was gone, the enemies of Jesus had won, death was final. But again, we know differently. We know that the events of Good Friday, all the suffering and death that Jesus endured actually give us hope. Humanity was doomed by its sin, by its turning away from God, doomed to death and exile from God. But Jesus came to put our exile to an end, he came in our flesh so that in our flesh he could bring about our redemption. His life poured out on the cross, the sufferings of his body and the outpouring of his blood, was a ransom that the Son of God was willing to pay for our salvation. We have hope exactly because of what happened on Good Friday, and without the Passion of the Lord, we would still be bound by a debt we could never repay. Jesus paid that debt, and so we can hope once again for a new life, life forever in the presence and in the perfect love of God.

During this Jubilee Year, Pope Francis has invited all of us to be pilgrims of hope, people on the way to God, filled with trust and confidence, filled with hope that we will reach him and be one with him. But the only reason for this hope, the only reason that we persevere on this journey at all, is the fact of Good

Friday. The only reason we continue this pilgrimage is because of the One who walked the way of the cross and gave his life freely and willingly so that we might live forever.

In a short time we will have the opportunity to venerate the cross, and this will be our chance to stand with Mary, and John, and Mary Magdalene, those who stayed close to Jesus out of compassion and hope. And then we will have a chance to receive Holy Communion, another moment of hope on this solemn day. Through the Eucharist, the sacrifice of the cross is made present to every corner of the earth, through time and into eternity. In Holy Communion we are one with Jesus in this moment of his greatest love. Just as he gave his life for us upon the cross, so he gives his Body and Blood to us on this most holy day.

Today, my friends, we are here not really to lament the death of Christ, even though we are right to have sorrow for our sins, the sins that led to his death. Rather, we are here in a quiet spirit of joy, and with a deep feeling of hope. We look upon Jesus on the cross, and we know that through all the pain he suffered, suffered for love of us, he has won the greatest victory imaginable. By his death he has taken the sting out of death, and by his love he has overcome the power of sin. We are here to praise and thank God for sending us his Son, who would become our redeemer on the rough wood of a cross. We thank God for the sacrifice of his own Son, a sacrifice that endures for all time and extends to every soul that has ever lived. We give thanks for the realization that Jesus did all of this even when we were far from him because of our sin, even when we had turned our faces away from God. Today we are filled with hope, because he has never turned his face from us. As Isaiah tells us, "By his wounds we were healed."