

Father John's Gospel Reflection



Good Friday Homily

HOMILY – FRIDAY, 14 APRIL, 2017 – GOOD FRIDAY (John 18:1-19:42)

If ever the Gospel could be referred to as "good news"- then John's Gospel would win the prize!

In this Gospel, Jesus is in charge - nothing happens to him without his consent. Jesus is in total command of the events on that Friday we call "Good". In that garden, he looks directly into the eyes of those who have come to arrest him, "Who are you looking for?" When he declares to his captors "I am he", he reveals himself by the divine name ascribed only to God.

Unlike the account in the other Gospels, Jesus longs for the cup of suffering, he is determined to drink the "cup" of his death because this act is the ultimate in love, and reveals God's love for us all.

Then in his confrontation with Pilate, we see no snivelling coward, no grovelling criminal, Jesus stands totally in command of the situation and Annas is left bewildered and confused. Having been struck on the face by the Temple police, Jesus is left totally composed after the incident. He replies that his teaching has always been open and explicit, "My kingdom is not of this world." - here the prisoner interrogates his interrogator!

The scenario Jesus paints is of two worlds - two contrasting realities: a sinful present and a holy redeemed future. A world of hatred, prejudice, and untruth which exercises its toxic power, and a world where truth, love, harmony reign. He who is the light of the world, bears witness to the truth - and this bearing witness to the truth is the overwhelming mission of Jesus.

Upon the Calvary cross Jesus dies with majestic assurance. His moment of death fits the tone of a story, complete - he bows his head and gives up his spirit. But the drama is not over yet, his executioners want to hasten his death by breaking his bones - but his bones are not broken as he is dead - such is the description of the sacrificial lamb, for Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

The drama is over, the itinerant Mediterranean peasant was not the weak Nazarene, dragged to his death. He who never lived a life of fear, nor did he die complaining – he lived as a leader, and died with a strength that frightened his tormentors and killers. He defied all despots and oppressors - he muted Evil, crushed Falsehood and choked Treachery.

While the powerful message has been perverted over the centuries, on this Good Friday we remember a man sent forth upon this earth possessed with a new spirit, with power to crumble all wealth and power built upon human bones and misery. He came to demolish majestic palaces, built upon the graves of the weak and to crush idols, erected upon the bodies of the poor.

Jesus was not sent here to teach us to build magnificent churches and temples amidst the cold wretched hovels, huts and refugee detention centres. He came to make the human heart a temple - that was the mission of Jesus, the Nazarene, and that was why he was crucified and continues to be crucified.

But if humanity was wise, it would stand today and sing in strength the song of conquest and the hymn of triumph.

Forgive us Lord, for we do not know what we are doing.

Let us see on this Good Friday a Jesus who leads us to love, forgiveness, compassion and reconciliation. Since we are his body, we too are the sacrament, the bread broken for others. He stands upon the cross, arms outstretched, gathering us together as one family for him and one family for one another.