

Good Friday
The Celebration of the Lord's Passion
Homily ~ April 22, 2011

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A man walked into a cross shop one day complaining that his cross was too heavy and rough and that he needed a new one. He tried out all kinds of crosses, too heavy or light. Then he picked up a cross that felt just right and declared that he would take that one. The shop owner, somewhat disappointed, told him that was the cross he came in with. Can you see your cross as a blessing?

Good Friday is all about the transforming power of suffering love.

It takes two pieces of wood to make a cross. The vertical stick could represent God's love for us. God so loved the world that he sent his only Son to die for us. Beaten, scourged, laughed at, ridiculed, tortured, he accepted it all out of love for us. He took upon himself all our sins. The Lamb of God, the High Priest, willingly suffered for us to free us from the consequences of our own sins.

We sing: *Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world.* Jesus takes away sin by absorbing and transforming sin. How does that happen?

Take a water filter. A filter takes in impure water, holds the impurities inside of itself, and gives back only pure water. It *transforms* rather than *transmits*.

We see this in Jesus. Like the ultimate cleansing filter, he purified life itself.

- ❖ He takes in hatred, holds it, transforms it, and gives back love.
- ❖ He takes in fear, holds it, transforms it, and gives back freedom.
- ❖ He takes in jealousy, holds it, transforms it, and gives back affirmation.
- ❖ He takes in Satan and murder, holds them, transforms them, and gives back only God and forgiveness.
- ❖ And in doing this, Jesus doesn't want admirers, but imitators.
- ❖ He doesn't want fans, but followers.

The cross which we will venerate today, invites us—every one of us—to help absorb, purify and transform tension and sin rather than simply transmit them. Such is the love of God revealed in Jesus' suffering on the cross.

The horizontal stick represents God's call to love one another. It is our response to God's love in Jesus. How can we love one another?

The main way is through relationships. God's greatest hurt is our broken brotherhood and sisterhood.

How important, indeed how essential, it is that you and I learn to love, forgive and accept one another. Otherwise, our religion and professed belief is a sham.

How can we claim to love God and yet go on...

- ❖ being rude to each other,
- ❖ taking advantage of each other,
- ❖ putting each other down,
- ❖ gossiping about each other,
- ❖ avoiding each other?

Have we not yet learned the most basic truth of our faith, that what we do to the least of our brothers and sisters, we do to Jesus? Yes, the horizontal arm of the cross upon which Jesus hung his arms is all about relationships. How we get along with each other is the measure of our relationship with God.

As we mark Good Friday and venerate the cross before us, may we have a stronger faith in the power and depth of God's love for us. And may we respond to that love by learning from the tremendous lover of all times how to love each other from the heart through loving relationships.

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