

GOOD FRIDAY HOMILY 2020

Isaiah 52: 13 – 53:12 + Hebrews 4: 14-16; 5: 7-9 + John 18: 1 – 19:42
Holy Spirit Catholic Church: April 10, 2020

Our separation from God is over.

The Son of God by his death on the cross has reconciled the world to himself. Christ Jesus has undone the sin of Adam, has washed away our sins in his blood, and by his death given us new life and united us to His Father.

By the power of the cross, our separation from God is over.

But in the 21st century where we have so many ways to connect to each other, why is it that so many feel isolated from God and others?

Especially at this time when we “shelter in place,” we can feel cut off from God and others.

In this new age of coronavirus, we have been encouraged to keep our distance from one another to slow the spread of the virus.

However, “social distancing” is not the best term for this action, because more than ever before we long for and desperately need social connection. It would be better to practice “physical distancing,” while reaching out to others and connecting to them socially.

We are created by God for connection with God and others, for union with God and others.

We are made to reach out to others, to seek communion with them.

Catholics long for Holy Communion—the Sacrament— but also long for what the celebration of the Eucharist brings— communion with the other members of the Body of Christ.

Praying together with others is part of our DNA— we are made to be with others in worship.

At this time when we are not able to come together in worship, we are united with each other in this common suffering.

In fact, suffering of any kind unites us, even when we are physically separated from each other.

The Son of God was not spared the very human experience of suffering. All of us who are flesh and blood encounter the mystery of suffering.

No one escapes suffering, even though some try to escape it through the various “sedatives” of today’s world.

The question is: what will we do with the suffering that is ours?

Will we embrace it or try to escape it?

Jesus, the Suffering Servant of God, shows us a way forward.

Because of Jesus’ free embrace of the cross

and the suffering which flowed from his acceptance of his cross,

Jesus has changed suffering to glory and death to life.

Also, because of the cross, the suffering of those who love the Crucified One becomes a Communion between them.

Those who are marked by the cross in baptism are joined to each other

in the suffering they freely embrace because of their love for the Crucified Lord.

This is what I would call the “Communion of saints”

with that word, “saints”, beginning with a small “s.”

We are never alone in our suffering, for we are joined to our brothers and sisters in the Lord in their suffering.

As we take our pain and our struggles to Christ on the cross, we are assured that we do not go there alone but are joining others at the foot of the cross.

Acceptance of pain can become our gift to each other in Christ.

Acceptance of our fear of death and even embracing death itself in trust becomes our gift to others in Christ.

Embracing the hardships of this particular time is our gift of Christ’s love to one another; our gift of Christ’s life to one another.

As we recognize that in our suffering we are united to the glorified body of Christ,

all those holy women and men who have gone before us in faith,

we enter into the “Communion of Saints” with a large “S.”

People of faith never ever suffer alone, even though it may feel that way at times,

for we are not only joined in our suffering to the suffering Body of Christ on this earth but also to his Glorified body in heaven.

As we become filled with anxiety over this modern-day plague,

let us invite St. Aloysius Gonzaga to walk with us, to help us carry our cross.

St. Aloysius took care of those dying of the plague in Rome at the end of the 16th century, and eventually died of the plague himself at 24.

As we worry about our health, St. Therese of Liseux walks with us.
She contracted tuberculosis at a young age and suffered greatly because of it,
dying at the end of the 19th century at the age of 24.
She, too, helps us carry our cross at this time.

As we take our suffering to Christ on the cross,
he receives our cross in order to give us his cross.
We give him our pain and sorrow and struggles in order that we might receive his cross.

For his cross is like a rudder, steering the ship of our life through stormy waters,
assuring us that we are redeemed.
His cross is an anchor, for as the huge waves of fear and uncertainty
seem to tip the boat of our life, we are firmly rooted in the conviction that we are saved.
We have nothing to fear.
The cross of Christ is our greatest hope and the very source of our joy,
for by it we have been healed and embraced by Him who reminds us
that nothing and no one can separate us from his love.
So, Christ from the cross invites us to be courageous and open ourselves up to his love.
We are all in this boat together and the captain of the ship
will steer us through this stormy time.

By receiving the Lord's cross, by adoring the wood on which hung
the salvation of the world, we receive our Savior.
He gives us his hands to take firm hold of his saving cross;
his power to make it a source of blessing; his life to cause it to flower;
and his heart to enable us to accept with love our burdens and the burdens of others.

Fr. Joseph A. Jacobi