Homily

April 15, 2022

Good Friday

41:12 – 53:16

From the very beginning of John’s Gospel account, the strength of Jesus is evident:

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God…And he pitched his tent to dwell among us.”

These are intentional words. These are the words of the one who is so close to the Father that he can say, “The Father and I are One.” And throughout the Seven Signs that we see littered through the Gospel, he is in command. He knows what he is doing. He has clear purpose. And in the long discourses, he makes it clear that those who believe in him will have strength by being bound to him.

“I am the vine; you are the branches.”

So it should not be a surprise, my brothers and sisters, that when we get to Good Friday and we hear John’s Passion account, that the Lord Jesus is powerfully in charge. He goes out to those who come to him. He doesn’t wait. He steps forward and speaks and he intentionally challenges – high priest, Pilate – in their sense of power. Power over his life. Power over life itself.

And even as he is crucified, there is still strength there in his few words and in his passing over care. First Mary to the beloved disciple and then the beloved disciple to Mary. And the beloved disciple in John’s Gospel account, though most would assume that’s John himself, the youngest of the disciples. It is actually an image of the Church, the people of God. Yes. The Lord entrusts his own mother to God’s people and God’s people to his mother.

We could go on and look at the Resurrection accounts. But there’s no need. That same leader, this Jesus, a man of strength, even in his resurrection, intentional and powerful, especially in his breaking into Magdala’s life once again.

All because of the Cross. It is in John’s Gospel account that the ***Glory of the Cross*** is laid bare. The glory of the Cross. This is a day for triumph and glory, my brothers and sisters, even as it saddens us to recall the events. As John tells us, it is for us to embrace the Lord’s triumph over sin and death through the power of the cross.

The disciple, Paul, who died before John wrote his Gospel account, made it very clear in the letter to the Galatians, Chapter 6, verse 14, of what he thought of the Cross upon which Jesus died. And he said, “But as for me, may I never boast, except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.”

Yes, brothers and sisters, this day urges us to see the Cross as triumph. It is triumph over sin and death, the hated Roman torture device has been redeemed, as it were, to become a sign of God’s mercy, love, salvation.

This year, beyond triumph, let us consider, what do I bring to the foot of the Cross?

Perhaps the Passion, as we just heard, can guide us to an answer. Mary leaves her heart and grief at the Cross. The beloved disciple leaves his solitude, to embrace accompaniment.

In the “Stations of the Cross, with Pope Francis,”(which some of us here who have celebrated the Stations this Lent may recognize.) I was struck recently by the following meditation on the 13th Station: Jesus is taken down from the Cross and given to his mother. It reads from Pope Francis, “No one can approach and touch the Cross of Jesus without leaving something of himself or herself there, and without bringing something of the Cross of Jesus into his or her own life.”

What today can be left at the foot of the Cross?

Please God, the Church herself leaves her sorrow for those abused, her promise to remain vigilant and her confession of the sins of her leaders and members.

But back to the question for you and me. Following our Lent, what can we leave at the foot of the Cross?

Perhaps it’s an envy, which needs to end.

Perhaps it’s an anger or resentment.

Perhaps it’s our very heart, our very being – first dedicated in baptism and now renewed.

Perhaps we will leave the sin in our life, which nails another to a cross.

Perhaps it’s thankfulness for Jesus’ sacrifice.

Or it may be our sacrificial giving-up during this season, which we have successfully, or

not-so-successfully completed.

Perhaps it’s grief from loss of someone we love.

Or we leave a promise to pray daily to the God of our salvation.

Or we leave behind the sacrifices we intend to make to support organizations who serve the

needs of others.

Or perhaps it is the stone that we have been caressing, as noted in the homily 2 weeks ago of

the woman caught in adultery. Is it time to leave that at the foot of the Cross?

These are but a few suggestions for our consideration.

Following the sung Intercessions, Deacon Tom & I will process among you with the cross slowly unveiling it. And having seen it unveiled, we shall then be invited to come adore by touch, or gaze, or kiss, or genuflection. But to these traditional adorations of that wood, I invite all of us to decide, “What shall I bring to the foot of the Cross.

At the end of the pews there are some small salmon-colored papers, the same color as your worship aid. In some pews there are pencils and some they have disappeared, and others, I hope maybe you have a pen with you. In the next moments, I invite you to consider the question, or the statement on that slip, and to jot down something that you would leave at the foot of the Cross.

Now, perhaps in this short time of reflection, you as an introvert are not ready to state that. You need to ponder a little more. Then let the intentions that we pray and then the exposition of the wood give you the time you need. And so when you approach the Cross to adore it today, drop that piece of paper into the baskets that will be here on either side of the Cross. These will remain by the Cross for the remainder of our service.

And then tomorrow night they will be burned in the Easter fire – a sacrifice consumed that began here, at the foot of the Cross.