

Homily - Good Friday 2024

The light of the world has gone out.

The Savior, the Messiah, hangs dead on a cross.

Darkness has fallen over the world, and the promise of a Kingdom of God seems hollow in the face of abject suffering and humiliation.

With evil and suffering comes confusion.

How could the Lord's plan end in this?

Why, with all his power, would he willingly walk this path of pain and agony?

What could it mean, and how could his work of redemption be accomplished even in death?

Death and sorrow marked the hearts of all who had followed Christ up to the hill of Golgotha.

Most of his friends had abandoned them and had their faith shaken beyond enduring.

The unbearable scandal of the Cross had proved too much, and like Adam and Eve in the garden, they fled from the sight of God, who gazed down in love from his place of torture.

But not all.

Some few still remained.

Those who had loved Christ most deeply, who had encountered the fullness of his mercy, who had rested on his heart and knew his inmost thoughts.

They remained at the foot of the Cross, hanging on to the hope that had not yet gone out.

Foremost among them were his closest friends, his beloved disciple, and his own Sorrowful Mother, who shared in spirit in the agonies of her Son.

In the throes of his suffering, he gave them a new mission, and entrusted them to each other.

“Behold your son. Behold your mother.”

With those words, the Church, personified in the apostle, was embraced in the communion of their love.

Just as Mary had given life to her infant child and placed him in a manger, now she would give new life to his Mystical Body and place us in the heart of God.

As he took his last breaths, it became clear what our salvation was worth.

Everything: the life of the Son of God himself, who laid it down to free us from the darkness of death that has followed us since the first moment of our life.

They watched as a lance was thrust into his side, piercing heart and lung so that blood and water, images of the very sacraments of the Eucharist and Baptism that would unite his church, poured forth in a life-giving stream of his merciful love.

And when he was laid in the tomb, the darkness continued, the darkness of desperate hope and anticipation, that his promise of redemption and renewal might still be fulfilled.

Tonight, we wait with his friends and his Blessed Mother.

We ponder the glory and the horror of the Crucifixion, and the price paid for our souls, a sacrifice willingly given for each one of us.

The Cross still stands as a sign of that scandal of his death, a death that upended death itself, destroying its power over our souls and shattering the gates of Hell.

The mystery of the Cross is a mystery of darkness and light, of salvation and destruction, a mystery of a love that held us in his heart from before the beginning of time itself.

The full glory of that mystery will be revealed, in time, as we approach the blessed night of Easter, but for now, we wait and pray.

We entrust ourselves to his mercy, we give thanks for the price he paid, and we gaze at the sign of his triumph, on which hung the salvation of the world.