

**St. Ann's Church – Washington, DC**

**Good Friday – April 10, 2020**

**Homily by Msgr. James D. Watkins, Pastor**

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A very real feeling of Good Friday is all around us today, as we continue to struggle with the fallout of this terrible health crisis in our nation and throughout most of the world. Each of us is trying to make the best of this extremely difficult situation; the coronavirus pandemic strikes at the heart of our lives and loved ones. Clearly, we are very close to Jesus in a special way today as we watch our Divine Lord take up His cross, suffer so cruelly and the hands of hypocrites, and die the infamous death of Calvary to atone for our sins and open the gates to the graces towards our salvation. In light of the pandemic which encircles us and makes us afraid and anxious about our health and safety, Good Friday this year takes on a very special meaning. We stand at the foot of the Cross and watch. There are no words to express our sorrow. We probably feel helpless, vulnerable, afraid, worried, upset, and wondering. Perhaps we feel as if we can do nothing to help our Lord as he dies before our eyes, streaming with tears. This is our own personal experience, no doubt, as we watch the world's cross borne by so many who are afflicted and dying around us.

As perhaps strange as it may sound, spiritually, this is exactly where we should be today. It IS Good Friday. The saying, "T G I F" originates in Good Friday: "Thank God, it's Friday." There's something very Good about this special Friday each year. It was on that first Good Friday that we remember all of the events which led up to the passion and death of the Lord and, as Catholics, we not only remember the past but re-present those powerful events and their meaning every Good Friday, indeed, every Friday, as we cry out, "T G I F!" – "Thank God, it's Friday!" Why? Because this is the day our divine Lord offered Himself for each one of us, for every human being, in the unique and perfect act of sacrifice of His own life for the salvation of the world. No one has ever accomplished such a universal feat in the history of mankind. This is the hour of God's victory over

sin through the death of His only beloved Son, truly divine and truly human, Son of God and Son of Mary, our divine Savior.

And so we stand and watch. There is nothing we can do right now except to stand and to watch, not as passive spectators but with hearts profoundly moved to simply take Him down from the Cross and hold Him close in the reality of pain and sorrow. That's all we can do right now. And that is probably what most of us feel right now as we go through the apparent darkness of this time of trial and anxiety about the weeks and months, even perhaps years ahead. What shall we do? What can we do? When will it all end? Is there really a cure? I don't know. So, each of us lives in wonder, doubt, and some restless fear.

And yet we say, "T G I F" – "Thank God, it's Friday" – because we live in hope of a better day, a more beautiful day, when, as winter gives way to spring, death gives way to life. We have the benefit of knowing in faith what those first disciples on that first Good Friday did not know: the resurrection of Jesus from the dead in glorified flesh awaits. From the tomb will arise the same God-Man from the dead to be truly victorious over death and to crush forever the powers of the world which would have been pleased to crucify Him forever. There is, my friends, no Easter Sunday without Good Friday. The two are linked; there is a distinction between these events, but there is no separation.

If we are to live with Him, we must die with Him. To die with Him is to offer up our sins to Him, so that He can take them and crush them under the weight of the Cross. To die with Him is to acknowledge my utter vulnerability, that I cannot ultimately control the forces of life and death, that I am not absolutely my own God, that I cannot control Him or His plan for me entirely, that I rely upon His grace and love, that I accord my own will with His. Perhaps the only words I CAN say today are united with His, as He hangs in desperation upon the Cross, "Father, not my will be done but Thine." Thy will be done. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And give us just enough daily bread today and only for today to make it through this day. This takes a tremendous leap of trust in God. Of course, that is what Jesus did and continues to show us how to do it. "Into your hands, I commend my spirit." Isn't that we are called to do. To trust. "Thy Will be done. Thy Kingdom come," – not MY will be done, not MY kingdom come. This is the moment when we are invited, even challenged, to change my

perspective from controlling the arrangement of things. Our Lord perhaps is allowing for this amazing “curve ball” of sickness and plague to remind us once again of our need (perhaps not our WANT), our real NEED to return to Him and to trust. In fact, this has always been the invitation for men and women in every age where there is suffering and pain, war and hunger, poverty, disease and every kind of injustice.

Yet, we as believe and have said from this pulpit so many times, human life is no less beautiful when it is accompanied by sickness or illness, hunger or poverty, mental or physical handicaps, loneliness or old age. Indeed at these times, life takes on extra splendor, as it invites us to show our care, concern, and reverence. It is often in and through the weakest of human vessels that God continues to reveal the power of His love. In and through the weakest of human vessels. Behold the wood of the Cross, on which hung the Savior of the World. Our God becomes the weakest of human vessels today on this Good Friday, to show immense solidarity with us, not to abandon us, not to mock us, not to inflict hurt and more pain, but to take all of that, if we let Him, to take all of that suffering and pain and sickness and sorrow, sin itself, upon Himself and to offer it all up as a perfect sacrifice to His Father for our salvation. Wow! What God has ever done that for mankind before or could ever do that in the future. “It is finished,” He would cry out, as He completes the masterful symphony of love. The most beautiful Savior who becomes the weakest of human vessels, dying on a Cross out of love for each of us until the end of all time. In and through the weakest, in and through Jesus, the weakest, we find our strength, the grace not to cope, but the grace to live, seeing in and through the weakest among us the power of God’s love. “T G I F”

God loves you. He died for you. He saves you. Into your hands, O Lord, we commend our spirits.

Deliver us, O Lord, from every evil and grant us peace in our days. In your mercy, keep us free from sin and save us from all distress, as we await with hope the coming our Savior, Jesus Christ.