

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I can remember as a child I questioned why we would call today Good Friday. I was thinking that it was the day that Jesus was falsely accused, put in prison, all His friends deserted him, He was beaten, humiliated, and nailed to a cross, the most painful death known to the Romans at the time. How can this be good? Should it not be called Terrible Friday? I remember the class talking to Sister Sylvester about this in 5th grade. She told the class that it was called Good Friday because none of this was forced on Jesus but He did it on His own out of love for the Father and for you and me. "What greater love is there for a man than to lay down his life for a friend?" Jesus turned the Cross from an instrument of torture, death, humiliation, and intimidation, into a sign of life, dignity, hope, and love. We know that no nails could hold Jesus to the cross, but only His love for you and me.

Before I entered the seminary I invited an elderly priest out to eat. I began to tell him all the things wrong in my life and he looked at me with a big smile and said, "Tim the cross, the cross always before you." The words ring out in my mind and heart even today as we are going through this time of shelter in place. It is a reminder to us that no matter what we go through in life that Jesus went through it before us, and goes through it with us. One of the devotions I have in my spiritual life is The Way of the Cross. (Might be a wonderful devotion for us and our families to go online and find a version of the Stations and follow it together.) Yes, it lays out for us the sacrifice of Jesus, but it is also a reminder of the fact that we have a God who not only knows what we are going through, but understands because Jesus went through it Himself. When I am struggling with a life or spiritual issue, I look to the life of Jesus to see where He had the same struggle. It gives me strength to know and understand He went through it before me and goes through it with me.

Mother Theresa, in all of the chapels of her order, had the words "I thirst" put under the crucifix. She told her sisters that these words remind us that Jesus did not so much thirst for water, but He did and does thirst for our love. We have the body of Jesus on our cross, not that we believe He is still there, but because it is a sign to us of His great love for us 2000 years ago and His love for us today. I believe as in life there are times when we may question if Jesus really loves us. I have found in my own life that if I spend time just simply gazing on the crucifix, meditating that in His divine mind Jesus knew me when He was on the cross, knew the times I would not love Him, my brothers and sisters, and even myself as He has called me, he looked down and said, in my love for you I die for you anyway. This love gives us true freedom; this love takes us from the brokenness of our lives, and reminds us we are loved. It reminds us of who we truly are, the children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit.

On this Good Friday the Lord has brought to my mind and heart a memory that lifts my heart. Shortly before my brother passed away, when the pain was uncontrollable, I was sitting on the side of his bed holding his hands and praying. He all of a sudden got a smile and a look of joy on his face, which it had been over two years of battling cancer since I had seen him smile, I asked him what was going on. He replied, "Don't you see it". I asked what. He began to tell me in great detail how Jesus had come off the crucifix on the hospital wall at the foot of his bed and came down and was embracing him and how Jesus told him he was always with him, always loved him and would carry him home. For the next two days there was a great change in my brother, the pain was still there, but there was peace, there was hope, and there was love. On that day Jesus kept his promise and carried him home.

My dear brothers and sisters this is why we call it Good Friday.