

Fr Dispin John – Homily – Good Friday Service – The Lord's Passion – 10/4/2020

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Good Friday, a time to remember the cross venerated, and find comfort in the Lord. Whenever we visit a place of pilgrimage, for example, Lourdes or Fatima, you see a lot of people with all sorts of illnesses either walking or being carried for healing. In my experience of visiting a few such places, I have seen a lot of people in churches or temples. I believe that there is an expectation that God will somehow take away our pains and suffering. I think there is also a bit of questioning happening here. Something like, "Hey, God, aren't you supposed to be good? Aren't you supposed to be in charge? Then why let me suffer? You better make me better now. If you are really powerful, if you are truly good, you would remove all this suffering. You would take away all this pain."

If you want to interpret the same thing with a little bit of anger, we might say, "God, how dare you not do anything in the face of my suffering? God, how dare you not do anything in the face of my pain and loss? How dare you?" I suppose we are in a similar situation where we realize that we are not in control, and God doesn't seem to be either. A sense of hopelessness and doubt keeps creeping up our minds. Even as disciples, as believers, this seems to be affecting every one of us. And yet today, we gather around the cross and recollect the suffering and pain and cruel death of somebody who died 2000 years ago.

From the beginning, Saint Paul in his writings calls the cross "as the power of God and the wisdom of God." It's an irony that somebody who died as a criminal, totally helpless, has become the power of God? As we gather under the foot of the cross today, we realize that this cross is still the answer to our sufferings, uncertainties, pain, and loss. We look at the bruised face of Jesus, His hands and His side, His knees and His foot, and try to relate our pain to His own suffering. The image of Jesus on the cross is a reminder to us. Here is a God who is so humble. Here is a God yet powerful. Here is a God who is so wise.

Because God, you let yourself be completely stripped. You let yourself be completely overwhelmed by the suffering, pain, evil and death. So that when I look at the cross, at the image of Jesus on the crucifix, we can say, "That is a God who loves me. That is a God who knows my pain, my heartaches, my sinfulness, and my brokenness. That is a God who understands suffering because He himself suffered. That is a God who empathizes with me in my complete failures." When we look at Jesus on the cross, we see a God we can trust.

God is so good. God is so powerful and so wise, and the cross is His answer. The cross we carry today with this frightening pandemic and the loss of our social and religious communion is a cross we must carry, but with the knowledge that Jesus is walking ahead of us, in front of us, carrying this cross with us and for us. We are not suffering alone. Christ is suffering with us. I believe that the cross of Jesus is more relevant than ever before. You know why? As the world is not able to see a hope beyond this current suffering and disaster, the cross of Jesus is the answer.

Remember in our story of the Good Friday the story does not end with today's suffering. We know that the resurrection is the end of the story. The resurrection of Jesus completes this story, and therefore, the cross is the answer that points to God's saving and redeeming act of raising us from this darkness just like God raised Jesus from the darkness of death and the cross. By emptying Himself on the cross, by suffering and dying, Jesus points to that everlasting life and new hope and new life. So the cross is the answer. This is the answer of God to our suffering.

So parishioners, friends, family, everyone, this Holy Week, this Good Friday, and our own life, I invite you to please do not remove cross and Christ from your lives because you will always have a cross. You will always have a pain. But with God's help, with Christ being with us by our side, we know that it will be easy to carry our own crosses too because we know Christ is walking before us and by our side. So hold onto the cross. Let it be before you always, before your eyes every day, and let the power of God take you over, lead you. And God, who answers our cries and pleas, will give us new strength and lead us into that everlasting life. God loves us, and Jesus is the answer. Cross is the answer.