

GOOD FRIDAY 2020

As we celebrate this solemn Liturgy of the Lord's Passion, it is a Good Friday like no other.

Like Ash Wednesday almost 50 days ago, Good Friday is a day when people are moved to be in church.

This year we cannot; for our safety and that of our neighbor, we have to stay home.

Fortunately we have the internet and can be connected with one another through Facebook and YouTube.

And so, keeping the current health crisis in mind, let us turn to the readings to which we have just listened.

Whenever I read the Passion Narrative or pray the Stations of the Cross, I can't help but think of a scene from the mini-series "Jesus of Nazareth."

The crucifixion is taking place and Nicodemus, the good Pharisee, is standing nearby.

As he contemplates the sorrowful unfolding of events, he quotes the passage from the Prophet Isaiah which we heard in today's first reading:

"Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured..."

Yes, even our present suffering because of the Coronavirus.

After the fall of Adam and Eve God did stand aloof from the pain and sorrows his children would experience.

Rather, in Jesus God united himself completely with the trials and tribulations of our everyday lives.

This total sharing in the human condition is reflected in the passage from the Letter to the Hebrews which we have just listened to:

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin."

I think back to last Sunday's reading of the Passion according to St. Matthew. As Jesus hung upon the Cross he cried out:

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Thus Jesus summed up the agonizing alienation felt through human history in the face of tragedy and suffering."

But that was not our Lord's last word.

Our response to the Psalm today was quoted by Jesus in the account of the Passion found in the Gospel according to St. Luke:

"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

And so Jesus gives us the remedy for all our fears and doubts, even as we face this deadly virus:

Trust. Trust that our heavenly Father holds us in his hands. Trust in God's love for us. Trust that God is in control.

Jesus is the fulfillment of that ancient sign promised through the prophet: "Emmanuel, God is with us."

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In the Passion according to St. John from which we have just read, Jesus says: "It is finished."

The Passion and Death of Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Suffering Servant who would "surrender himself to death."

Having endured his Passion, and having poured out his blood on the altar of the Cross, Jesus offers his sacrifice eternally to the Father to "take away the sins of many, and win pardon for their offenses."

Therefore, we can "confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help."

Our world is always in need of this mercy and timely help, but especially in this moment of the world-wide menace of disease.

And so, in today's solemn Liturgy we unite ourselves to our crucified Savior as we offer up "prayers and loud cries of supplication to the one who is able to save us from death," as we intercede for all humanity.