

Church of the Good Shepherd and St. John the Evangelist

Good Friday
April 6, 2007
Fr. Bill McGinty

“The One Who Died”

We gather here this evening to stand by the cross of Jesus and remember the significance of his death for us. Good Friday and the reading of the Great Passion and death of Christ, reminds us of the reality of our faith and our time here on earth.

All around the world today processions of people will carry heavy wooden crosses into their churches. They will pause in silent prayer.

The Gospel of Jesus that we have proclaimed throughout Lent comes close to its climax and close with these final scenes of Jesus dying on the cross. It seems such a long way from the beautiful and joyful stories of Christmas and the birth of a Messiah. Yet the Gospel writings and St Paul, tell us that this is why he came.

He came among us that our lives might make sense. That pain, suffering, misery and hardship could be turned into something other than despair.

In our world, war and death surround us on all sides. Disease, be it caused by famine, aids or cancer causes untold suffering. The symbolism and meaning of Christ's' cross for us must be that none of these evils can win or overcome us. We know there is a better way than war. We know that love, caring and human kindness can transform suffering and pain. Jesus' cross tells us that we refuse to be defeated by life.

At the moment Jesus dies, his church lives. At the moment Christ surrenders his spirit; his spirit departs and inhabits each one of us.

The cross today challenges each one of us to continue Christ saving work in our lives. It is a challenge and a war we cannot refuse to fight. It is a battle between light and darkness, good and evil, justice and injustice, peace and violence. It will take place in every law court and in every classroom. It seeks to win the hearts of our young and cherish our old. It is a battle we wage as often with in ourselves, not to be seduced by the things of this world, but to work for the things that last; love, mercy, compassion, kindness, grace, loyalty, forgiveness, peace, friendship, courage and harmony.

When we look back down the path of our life and see that this is the way we have trod, then we can be rightly proud of the one who died and gave his life to show us the way.

On Good Friday I pause to think of the many men and women, who gave their lives to the Gospel and its proclamation, because of this cross. Most of them are now dead or in their declining years. Yet, I can still see them from 45 years ago, young, energetic, enthusiastic

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and full of the spirit of the Gospel. Whether it was in a classroom, a workshop or on a soccer or cricket field they communicated their great faith in a joyous way. It made you, as a young person, want to go deeper and find out about this Jesus who turned their world upside down.

The sixties and seventies would introduce a more cynical attitude to faith, religion and churches. We had programs and broadcasters like David Frost and later Dave Allen who ridiculed our values continuously.

Yet, all that bitterness can never dim the light of men and women who toiled amid poverty and ignorance, disease and war that the least of God's children could be cared for.

Think back on the teachers you remember who touched your lives in a profound way, and all too often it was because they too were people of faith who stood in the shadow of this cross and lived its values.

As we depart in silence for our homes this evening, let us renew our commitment to live our life wearing Christ cross as our badge of honor.

In Ireland in the 1980's, families had a habit of taking the cross off their loved ones casket before burial and hanging it in their home. I used to tell them: "Don't do that. That cross marks this body as Christian; they spent their life earning it. Leave it, that on the great day of Resurrection the Angel of God will know that a Christian lays here."

That Resurrection is coming for each one of us. It is made possible because our Christ, God's son, chose to die for us.

Until that great trumpet blast, let us take this cross, go out and fight day and night, for the Gospel it proclaims. Our Fathers defeated Fascism carrying this cross, and we ourselves watched Communism, with all its evils, topple.

Let us not relent, till ignorance, discrimination, racism, aids and poverty are also defeated. We are as Christ has told us, the Light of the World. Let us let that light shine for all to see.

Amen+

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