

Good Friday The Logic of the Cross

Fr. Frank Schuster

Last night, I asked the question, how do we live holy week? How do we enter into the story of our salvation? I shared that Pope Francis said something very meaningful at Wednesday's general audience. He said, "Living Holy Week means increasingly entering into God's logic, the logic of the Cross, which is not first of all that of pain and death, but of love and of self-giving that brings life." He invites us to consider that living Holy Week, which is the same things as to say, living the Christian life, involves stepping outside of ourselves in love of God and our neighbor.

On Good Friday, we are confronted with God's logic, the logic of the cross. Isaiah prophesied that Christ would be our suffering servant who gives his life as an offering for sin. Because he surrendered himself to death and was counted among the wicked, he shall take away the sins of many and win pardon for their offenses.

We are also confronted with God's logic in the Letter to the Hebrews. It says, "In the days when Christ was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death and he was heard because of his reverence...and became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."

And then, there is so much to choose from our Gospel Reading of the Passion according to St. John. I have shared with you before that there are three words in this Passion that summarize the whole paschal mystery. These words are the last spoken by Christ before his death on the cross. He says, "It is finished." In Greek, these words boil down to a single word, tetelestai.

In the past century, archeologists have found many items of interest in the Holy Land, some of which are old tax collector parchments. When a debt was paid in full, you see, the tax collector would write on the parchment, tetelestai, indicating the debt had been paid. So, the fact that Jesus says tetelestai before he dies on the cross carries with it a special significance.

Again, Pope Francis challenges us, "living Holy Week means increasingly entering into God's logic, the logic of the Cross, which is not first of all that of pain and death, but of love and of self-giving that brings life". For the Romans, the logic of the cross was a place to make an example of criminals by giving them a horrific and humiliating death. For Jesus, the logic of the cross is to become our paschal lamb who takes away the sins of the world.

What does this mean for us? We can begin perhaps with considering the crosses we carry in our own lives. Some of the crosses we carry have been given to us by others. Some of the crosses we carry, we have inflicted on ourselves. What is the heaviest cross we carry in our lives right now? Does it involve our vocation in life? Does it involve a family matter? Is it something associated with work or school? Is it something we are dealing with health wise or perhaps our relationship with God? What is the cross we carry tonight?

We are always tempted in life to assign blame when it comes to the crosses we carry. We sometimes blame others for what we should blame ourselves. Sometimes we blame ourselves when we should blame someone else. That is how our logic works.

Jesus' logic however is different. Even though he was innocent, he took upon himself our sins. Even though we are guilty, Jesus' logic is to be our paschal lamb. And as we will celebrate tomorrow night, Jesus' logic is death does not have the final say.

And so, tonight we are given the opportunity to reverence the wood of the cross. After the prayers of the faithful, we will be invited to touch the wood of the cross. When we touch the cross of Jesus, we call to mind the cross we carry in life and recognize that we never have to carry our cross alone. We call to mind that if we find ourselves crucified in life, Jesus wants to be crucified next to us. In fact, the message of Good Friday is that Jesus wants to be crucified for us. When we touch the wood of the cross, can we hear the gentle word of Jesus in our hearts, *tetelestai*, our debt has been paid in full? Can we then be moved to step outside of ourselves and share that kind of love with others, one soul at a time? If we do this, we will discover the logic of the Cross, which is not first of all that of pain and death, but of love and of self-giving that brings life.