

Good Friday Saved in Hope Part II

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This is the darkest day in the Church's calendar. Today is a day of fasting and abstinence, and rightly so, as we recall the cruelty of Jesus' passion and crucifixion. And yet, somehow we call today Good Friday. There is a dissonance in calling today good. It doesn't feel right to call this day good. Why would we call this day of all days good? The answer is the hope Jesus gives us today. The answer is hope. On Palm Sunday, I suggested that Holy Week is medicine for the soul. Last night, as we began the Holy Triduum, I shared Pope Benedict's thoughts from his encyclical *Spe Salvi* that the medicine Christianity offers the world is precisely hope. Without God we can only perceive life as coming from nothingness and returning to nothingness. With Jesus we know we have a future. We may not know all the details of where our lives are going but we know our lives do not end in emptiness. "*Spe salvi facti sumus*", in hope we are saved.

Central to this liturgy tonight is the veneration of the wood of the cross. We come tonight with our own crosses as well. Suffering is part of the human experience. Some of us come tonight with the physical sufferings that come from illness. Some of us come tonight with the emotional suffering that comes from being hurt by someone or perhaps with the grief of losing someone or even the burden of walking with someone who is suffering. Some of us come tonight with the spiritual suffering that comes as a result of our own sinfulness or even someone else's sinfulness. Some of us come tonight with moral suffering that weigh us down due to the injustices of our world. We come tonight with our crosses. And the Father responds to us by giving us his only Son nailed to a cross.

Pope Benedict reflects that "...Suffering is part of our human existence. Suffering stems partly from our finitude, and partly from the mass of sin which has accumulated over the course of history, and continues to grow unabated today". And Pope Benedict praises the great progress that has been made alleviate suffering, and continues, "Indeed, we must do everything we can to overcome suffering, but to banish it from the world altogether is not in our power. This is simply because we are unable to shake off our finitude and none of us are capable of eliminating the power of evil, of sin which, as we plainly see, is a constant source of suffering. Only God is able to do this: only a God who personally enters history by making himself man and suffering within history. We know that this God exists, and hence this power 'to take away the sin of the world' is present in the world. Through faith in the existence of this power, hope for the world's healing has emerged in history." Pope Benedict argues that this hope should have an impact on our lives in the here and now.

My friends, on this holy night Psalm 139 is fulfilled. I paraphrase, O where can I hide from your love O Lord. If I run to the mountains, you are there. If I run to the ocean, you are there. If I fall into the deepest darkest pit, *sheol*, and

to hell itself, you are there O God. When we find ourselves crucified in life, our heavenly Father's only Son is there right beside us. How is this possible without the bond of the Holy Spirit? The passion, death and resurrection of Jesus reveal to us a conspiracy of love of a Triune God that wills to save us all. *Spe salvi facti sumus*, in hope we are saved.

And so, what is the cross you are carrying in your life right now? What are the worries, anxieties, and sufferings you carry with you each and every day? Think about this right now. The invitation is to bring all of it to the wood of the cross tonight. I invite you when you touch the wood of the cross tonight to feel Jesus touching you in return. We know that everything in this life, the joys, the sorrows and everything in between; are opportunities that prepare us for the eternal life God has in store for us. We know this because our spiritual journeys do not conclude at the cross. Our journey continues as we keep vigil for the resurrection. Our Easter hope makes this Friday very good indeed and also makes for very good medicine for the soul. *Spe salvi facti sumus*. In hope, we are saved.