

Homily for Good Friday
by Bishop Felipe J. Estévez
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“God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

In this text, we see the whole meaning of the death of Jesus, the purpose of his life is to rescue us from evil and sin in order to give us life in abundance.

The current situation of so many dying, so many in fear, such uncertainty is a great challenge to our faith in God. With Jesus, we could easily say: Lord why have you abandoned us? Jesus embraces our pain, our anguish for real and Jesus did it far worse than one who is challenged in a lonely bed without help.

Today, the Church reads a poem that we find in the book of prophet Isaiah, chapters 52 and 53, called the Suffering Servant. It portrays someone who “bore our infirmities and endured our sufferings...who was pierced for our offenses and crushed for our sins and yet by his stripes we were healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

This Servant shall justify many by bearing our guilt. He shall take away the sins of many and win pardon for their offenses.

Jesus of Nazareth’s Passion and death fulfilled literally the Suffering Servant’s sacred words. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews writes: “Son though he was, he learned obedience for what he suffered, and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Hebrew 5:8).

Today, I invite every parent who is listening to me to hold high the Cross that is hanging someplace on a wall of your house and I invite every member of your household to come with reverence and kiss the Crucified, making a personal prayer to the Savior. Come and adore in silence and gratitude for the gift of his redemption. For as each one kisses Him, He kisses us in return with a love that gives us life and hope and inspires in us perfect contrition for sins committed due to our weakness.

On Good Friday, the church prays for the whole universe. We pray for the pope and our bishops, priests and deacons, religious and consecrated laity, but we pray especially for the catechumens who become Catholics in the Easter Vigil and all others who receive the sacraments and join the parish community. We pray for all those in public office, health providers, first responders, for their strength to continue saving lives, and caring for the sick with COVID-19.

This year, I have been attracted to an image of the Crucified surrounded all over by hands. The image is by artist Georges Rouault. From above, I identify the hands as the hands of the Eternal Father giving us His beloved Son, and all the other hands represent each of us searching for the Crucified from north, south, east, west; the entire human family all together searching for the Savior of humankind. The image of the Savior is pierced by his seven wounds, each inviting us to pass on to him our hidden sins which we hold in secret because they deeply embarrass us, but

in fact, they no longer are our own solely for they are also His as Isaiah said: “He shall take the sins of many, and win pardon for their offenses” (Isaiah 53:12).

We pray also for the unity of Christians that we may all live the truth and keep us all in God’s one church. We pray for our elders, the Jewish people that they may grow in the love of his Name and in faithfulness to his covenant; we pray for all those who do not believe in Christ, that the Holy Spirit may enlighten them and receive salvation; we pray today for those who do not believe in God, that they may always do what is right and may find the way to faith.

We pray this Good Friday for health to the sick and consolation to the dying, that their death may be a conduit to the arms of the loving and merciful Father.

Look, Jesus is Crucified in the victims of the coronavirus, those who are with terrible anxiety and fear, uncertain of their future. He is also in those who are found in hospitals filled to capacity with a respirator. Jesus is crucified in those families who write to me asking for prayers for their family members. They are in such pain and sadness for the situation of their beloved ones. Let us all bring our pain to the Cross as an offering to the Suffering Servant who was crushed for us.

Behold the wood of the Cross on which hung the salvation of the world. Come, let us adore him!