

## Homily for Good Friday April 3<sup>rd</sup> ( St. Jude Church)

### “The Cross of Christ: Where Suffering Meets Salvation”

Good Friday is the most solemn day in the Christian calendar. It is the day we remember—not celebrate in the usual sense—but *enter into* the suffering, crucifixion, and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. For Christians in general, and Catholics in particular, it is the day of love revealed in its most radical form: a love that suffers, a love that sacrifices, a love that gives everything.

On this day, the Church does not celebrate Mass. Instead, we gather for the **Liturgy of the Passion of the Lord**. We listen to the Scriptures—Isaiah’s Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52:13–53:12), Psalm 30, Hebrews, and the Passion according to John (John 18–19). We walk spiritually with Jesus along the **Way of the Cross**, the *Via Dolorosa*—the “Way of Sorrow”—where every step echoes pain, rejection, and yet, love.

#### **The Way of the Cross: A Journey of Suffering**

The *Via Dolorosa* is not just a path in Jerusalem; it is a path in every human life. As we pray the Stations of the Cross, we feel the weight of the cross pressing on Jesus’ shoulders. We see Him fall. We see His Mother, Mary, standing there silent, broken, yet faithful. We see Simon helping, Veronica wiping His face, and we see the cruelty of the soldiers. This is not a distant story. This is our story.

**The Theology of the Cross: God in Suffering:** Good Friday reveals a powerful truth: God does not remain distant from human suffering—He enters into it.

Isaiah tells us: *“He was pierced for our transgressions... by His wounds we are healed.”* Jesus is not a victim of circumstance; He is the Suffering Servant who freely embraces the cross. The theology of the Cross teaches us that suffering, when united with Christ, is not meaningless—it becomes redemptive.

**The Drama of the Passion: Human Faces, Human Failures:** In the Passion narrative, we encounter many characters:**1**: Peter, who promised loyalty, denies Jesus. **2**. Pilate, who knows the truth, washes his hands.**3** The crowd, once praising, now shouts, “Crucify Him!” **4**. The soldiers mock, torture, and nail Him to the cross.**5**. And what about the disciples? They run away. Only a few remain: Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and the beloved disciple, John. They stay. They watch. They suffer with Him. This is the painful truth: those who once said, “I will die with you,” are gone. Jesus is left alone.

**Jesus’ Feelings: Abandonment and Love:** Imagine the heart of Jesus. Betrayed by a friend. Denied by a disciple. Abandoned by many. Mocked, beaten, crucified. He knows loneliness. He knows rejection. He knows the silence when those you trust disappear. And yet—what does He say? “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” No anger. No revenge. Only mercy. This is the heart of God.

**A Mirror to Our Lives:** This happens in our lives too. People leave us. Friends disappear. Promises are broken. Sometimes for fear, sometimes for selfish gain, sometimes for reasons we don't understand. Good Friday teaches us: do not be surprised by abandonment—but do not let it turn your heart into stone. Jesus shows another way: forgiveness.

**Care and Love Even in Suffering:** Even in His agony, Jesus thinks of others. He looks at His mother and says, "Woman, behold your son." He says to John, "Behold your Mother." In that moment, He gives Mary to all of us. John represents every disciple—you and me. Even in suffering, Jesus creates a family of love.

**Where am I in this story?** Am I like Peter—fearful? Like Pilate—indifferent? Like the crowd—easily swayed? Or like Mary and John—faithful even in suffering?

**Veneration of the Cross: What and Why :** Today, we come forward to venerate the Cross. What does this mean? We kneel, we touch, we kiss the Cross—not because we worship wood, but because it holds the body of our Savior. The Cross, once a sign of shame and torture, has become the sign of our salvation. We venerate it because through it, love conquered sin.

**Holy Communion on Good Friday:** On this day, we receive Holy Communion—but there is no Mass. The Eucharist we receive was consecrated on Holy Thursday. This reminds us that today is a day of silence, of waiting, of absence. It is a day where the Church feels the weight of loss.

**Final Reflection: The Gift of Self:** Good Friday is the ultimate lesson in self-giving love. Jesus gives everything—His body, His blood, His dignity, His life. He holds nothing back. This is the theology of suffering: not that suffering is good in itself, but that love can transform suffering into salvation. As Hebrews reminds us, Jesus understands our weakness. He has walked this path before us. Dear friends, Good Friday is not the end. It feels like darkness, like silence, like defeat. But hidden within this suffering is hope. Because love that gives itself completely can never truly die. And from this Cross... resurrection will come.

**A Question for Meditation:** As we stand at the foot of the Cross today, one question remains: "What in my life needs to be surrendered to the love of Christ, who gave everything for me—and how am I being called to take up my cross and follow Him more faithfully?"