

Good Friday
Homily by Deacon Jim Olshefski
April 15, 2022

We call today, this second day of the Triduum, "Good" Friday because on this day we remember how much God loves us. We "celebrate" the Lord's passion which he underwent for us. But how can we "celebrate" the suffering of anyone, let alone Jesus, the Son of God? We can, and do, celebrate this day because Jesus suffered our suffering. The suffering and death of Jesus is God's own experience of all that we suffer, including death itself. Jesus not only knows and understands our suffering, he is with us in our suffering and death. His passion, death and resurrection transforms our lives. Today, we celebrate how his suffering was that of a "servant," about whom we heard in today's first reading, which is the fourth "servant song" from the book of the prophet Isaiah. For it was through the suffering endured by Jesus that we are set free from the power of sin, our sin, and the devastation of death. Jesus, just like the "suffering servant" was "pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins. "By his stripes we [are] healed."

As we "behold the wood of the cross, on which hung the salvation of the world," as we venerate and embrace this cross which represents God's mystery of love, we come to the realization that the cross:

- Is for me! It's personal. It's about my sins—my rebellion, the selfish choices that I've made, my failure to choose what is right and loving and heroic, AND
- It's for everyone; each and every one of us in God's creation. It's universal. Today, when I stand at the foot of the cross, I realize that I am in solidarity with everyone else—loved and forgiven by Jesus.

This is a solemn day; it's about an event almost two thousand years ago, but it's made quite real as we reflect upon it. It actually "happens" again today, as we ponder the mystery of God's love for us. The solemnity of this day is not just about sadness and guilt. For if that were all it was about, this day would lose its power. Today, we experience deep feelings that well-up from our very being like when we experience the death of a loved one. When we're receptive to this sacrificial gift from God, we gain our freedom from sin which enslaves and terrifies us. We're grateful for this gift from God.

Then, it becomes a very Good Friday, indeed.