

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Good Friday, April 10, 2020, Cycle A

Today, Good Friday, half way through Easter Triduum celebration of the Lord's Passion, Death, and Resurrection – we assemble as a family over the death of a most beloved member of our human family.

On Good Friday, we are the people seen in vision by the prophet Zechariah: "They shall look on Him, whom they have thrust through, and they shall mourn for an only son, and they shall grieve over him as one grieves over a first-born."

In fact, so conscious are we, this day, of Jesus' tragic death, that we do not celebrate Mass when we gather for worship. We move away from the Sacramental Commemoration of Jesus' death, and instead, fix our stunned gaze upon the broken, dead body of Jesus, hanging on the cross. However our scriptures will not let us focus so realistically upon the Passion of Jesus that we cannot move beyond his excruciating suffering. The scriptures call on us to reflect on the truth of Good Friday.

Jesus told Pilate: "The reason I was born and the reason I came into the world is to testify to the truth! And Pilate says: "What is the Truth!?" Exactly! What is the truth!?

The truth is that nothing of this transient world has power to provide us with lasting meaning, lasting pleasure, lasting happiness, lasting life. This finite world is in-capable of providing the healing that we so desperately desire for our broken lives. Jesus says: "My Kingdom is not of this world." My Kingdom really goes beyond this world. If nothing else the pandemic of the coronavirus reminds us that the created world cannot provide us with lasting happiness.

The truth is as – frightening as death is, as powerful as death can seem – death has no real power to rob me of life – if I place myself in the father's hands, as Jesus did! Jesus tells Pilate: "You have no power over me!" And Jesus says Coronavirus (our modern day Pilate if you will), you have no power over me. And it is Jesus who decides to embrace death head on: "It is finished," he says, as He hands over His Spirit.

The Good News of Good Friday is that Jesus, and we through Jesus, are in control – because Jesus and we (in Jesus) are one with the Father – who alone has the power of life in his hands.

It takes great faith to believe that Jesus and we are really in control – and not Agony, Suffering, and Death. For when we look upon the Body of the Crucified Jesus hanging helplessly on the Cross, we can indeed be so inundated by the horror of it all that we lose all sense of hope.

In the face of the suffering and death being dealt by the Coronavirus. In the face of our own seeming helplessness on this Cross of the Coronavirus, we begin to wonder, is life really the final answer? We need to remember, though, that Jesus of the Gospel of John does not cry out in anguish my God, my God why have you forsaken me as in Matthew's Passion Narrative did last Sunday! No, the Jesus of John is absolutely in control and it is He who decides it is Finished – Deliberately handing over His Spirit over to the Father.

John does not present a picture of a Jesus who is a victim: John's Jesus – is quite different than the Jesus of Matthew, Mark and Luke – where events control Jesus! John presents a different Jesus – who refuses to allow power, riches, fame (temptations in the desert) or agony and death to hold their power over him.

Paul's great Christological Hymn from his Letter to the Philippians sums it all up so well: On Palm Sunday we began Holy Week with Paul's Hymn: The Good News that turns the Agony of this Friday into Good Friday and into Easter Glory is that suffering, evil death has no real power over God's Son – or over us whom Jesus enables to become God's children.

Philippians 2:8-9

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**