

HOMILY: **Good Friday**

Isaiah 52: 13 – 53: 12 / Hebrews 4: 14-16; 5: 7-9 / John 18: 1 – 19:42

On the ruins of a wall in the city of Hiroshima, Japan, is the dimly-etched figure of a human being. The individual must have been standing next to the wall the moment the atomic bomb exploded on that horrific August day in 1945. The body was vaporized instantly, but it stopped enough of the bomb's awful light to leave that lasting epitaph on the wall.

A visitor to the site, a German theologian, moved by the haunting silhouette, was taken by one thought: Jesus Christ was there – there in the inferno with that person and with everyone who died in that horrible moment. *

The horror they may have had no time to feel, Jesus felt. The burning pain and interminable suffering of those who survived the hurricane of fire, Jesus suffered. The long, agonizing deaths thousands endured over time, Jesus endured.

That haunting etching is one of the many crosses etched on our memories, our consciences, our hearts: signs of suffering, signs of injustice, signs of violence –

all marks of the crucifixions of poverty, of disease, of greed, of racism that take place here and now, in our own Jerusalems and Galilees; the crosses that we all bear out of love, out of care, out of compassion, out of forgiveness.

The “goodness” of this Good Friday is this: Jesus' death on Good Friday is NOT the supreme offering to placate an angry God – in fact, it's the very opposite: Good Friday is an act of love by God himself: it's the very manifestation of God's complete, eternal and limitless love for a humanity he created to be the very expression of that love.

God's Crucified One was and is present in every crucifixion. Along the streets we all walk and the halls we all roam and in the rooms we all inhabit are unmistakable signs the Crucified in our midst.

The reality is that Christ shoulders every cross with us; Christ is with every innocent who perishes as a result of greed and hatred; Christ is heard in the voice of every soul who suffers what is right and just.

Christ was with those who perished this week in Brussels.

Christ is with those parents waiting by the bedside of their son or daughter, terrified that the teenager will not wake up from the drug overdose.

Christ walks alongside those whose race or religion or culture or nationality make them the target of every deluded bully and self-righteous bigot.

That is the wonder of the Passover of Jesus begun in the Cenacle last night:

that God never ceases to take the initiative in restoring us to wholeness and peace;
that the mercy of God is always at work transforming our lives from estrangement to reconciliation, from fear to hope, from division to community, from brokenness to wholeness, from death to life.

To be sure, this Good Friday should make us a little more conscious of our failings; a little more mindful of the work that God has entrusted to each of us to be the means for re-creating our world in his peace; a little more aware of God's compassion and mercy in our lives . . .

But this second day of the Easter Triduum should also make us realize that God is with us in every experience of crucifixion we endure or witness, and that, through the grace of God, we can make whatever crosses we carry the means for resurrection in our lives and the lives of those we love. And that realization should fill us with gratitude . . . and not a little humility.

In the love we behold this evening in the cross of Good Friday, may we put our shoulders with Christ's to help the broken and betrayed bear their crosses; to be, for one another,
the means for transforming every Good Friday crucifixion into Easter resurrection.

* From "The Central Murder" by Dale Aukerman, **Sojourners**, March 1980.

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