

## Homily for Good Friday

I know we've been talking about mercy a lot these past few weeks and months – but after all, it is the Jubilee Year of Mercy! And what is divine mercy, as opposed to let's say, divine justice? Well justice is that fundamental requirement to give everyone his or her rightful due. It's what we have coming. And because of our sins, what we should have coming to us is our eternal separation from God – in other words, hell. I know that seems dramatic; but it's nothing less than true. In its essence, sin is a failure of varying degrees to love God and to love our neighbor. It puts separation between us and others, forcing us to drift as an island of selfishness, isolation, and self-righteousness. That separation caused by our sins finds its fulfillment in eternity by being separated from Love forever. So, in justice, the punishment for our sins is hell.

However, as I've said again and again, God's divine *mercy* – does not give us what in justice we rightly deserve – but rather, that, which is so much more than we could ever merit. My friends, we can do so much for ourselves: we can earn a college degree and make a living; we can send a satellite to Pluto and beyond; we can build a tower stretching to the heavens. But we cannot save ourselves from sin. From our island, we can't simply row ourselves back to God and others as though nothing happened. God alone can save us from our sins. And only God can forgive sins, because sin is ultimately an offence against Him, who is Love.

And that salvation, that forgiveness of sins, comes to us from the cross. On the cross Jesus suffered and died for us. The Savior was completely God and completely man. Therefore, by God Himself becoming a human being, He takes the punishment destined for human beings because of sin, and cancels that punishment for those who receive Him. He draws back to Himself all of those many, many islands that had gone floating adrift, and He unites them to Himself, forming the great Land of God's Kingdom. Therefore, it is truly on the cross that God's justice and mercy meet; and the price of eternal, exacting justice was paid for by the complete and total mercy of Jesus' perfect sacrifice.

Now, we know that God has mercy upon us, as I just said. But the question of Good Friday is: Why? Why does God lavish His divine mercy upon us so that our sins can be forgiven, and we can live that eternal peace and blessedness that He desired for us from the beginning? Why? Because He loves us. God's divine love is a passionate love for us. And hidden in that word 'passionate' is the word, 'passion', which means suffering. Because God loved us so much He was willing to suffer and die for us so that He could save us.

But, as I've said previously about God's mercy – namely, that it's not merely meant for me, and for my salvation and my sanctification – so, I say about God's love and forgiveness. By receiving God's mercy in Jesus on the cross, we are filled with His love that forgives us and saves us. But, this love and this forgiveness are given so that they can be shared. And as the Son of God rightly teaches us in His prayer to His heavenly Father: “Forgive us our trespasses, **AS** we forgive those who trespasses against us.” And as the Master Himself said to His disciples after He washed their feet: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.”

My friends, the more we share with others the love God has for us and His forgiveness of our sins, the more we can truly experience the love and forgiveness we celebrate to day. In all honesty, it's something that requires a daily effort, and something that always requires God's grace. But, as He has done for us, so we are also to do. God bless you.