

## Homily for Good Friday

As Jesus says in John 15, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.” And what is it that Jesus commands us, His friends? We heard it yesterday evening from the very words of the Gospel: “Love one another as I have loved you... I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.” And in today’s liturgy of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, we not only recall, but we actually enter in to, that perfect model of self-sacrificing love, shown to us by Jesus on the cross.

This greatest act of love the world has ever known reveals to us the fundamental truth that for love to really be love it must involve some degree of suffering and sacrifice. As Mother Teresa powerfully stated, “I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love.” In other words, to really love another means that we not be afraid, that we not count the cost, that we give of ourselves freely. And when we freely choose this type of love, then even when we necessarily suffer in some way for the one we love, then that only becomes one more thing to receive and offer out of love.

If our love is dependent upon our conditions – for example, when and how I want to; up to, but not including anything that causes me any discomfort; or only in good times and in health, and just for richer – then that is not really love at all.

Jesus shows us the truly transforming power of love that comes to us by embracing our crosses in life and uniting any suffering we experience to His perfect suffering for us. And if we want a good measure of how much we love God and one another, as Jesus commands us to do, then we just need to see how much are we willing to sacrifice and even suffer for another. Our Savior suffered more for us than anyone could ever suffer for another. Many parents heroically sacrifice for the true well-being of their children. But what about us?

As Scripture teaches us, “God is love”. And so, if we truly want to spend eternity perfectly embraced and enfolded in the perfect, tender love of God, then we must not see suffering in our lives in the here and now as something to be avoided at all cost. Rather, our sacrifices that we’ve made this past Lent, and the suffering that we unite with Jesus when we are physically sick or emotionally distressed, and the unforeseen trials that we are to patiently bear – all these, can help us grow in love – but only if we let Jesus in more deeply to transform us. His suffering and death was not the end, but merely the beginning of eternal life and love with God for ever.

My friends, we cannot give away what we do not possess. And we only get to keep what we freely give away. God bless you.