

Good Friday – Cycle C
April 2, 2010
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Good afternoon. Today as we celebrate and reflect on the Passion of Jesus Christ I want to reflect on as I was sitting here last night alone with me and my dog. Everyone else was around next door and I like to be alone if possible if I am not on the road. So I am sitting here and I am reflecting on God the Father up there holding Jesus, I am reflecting on our Blessed Lady holding Christ and was reflecting on their pain and what was going through their minds if you will if you can ever get into the mind of God and then I reflected on Christ. And so what we really want to look at this day are the three people that the Passion has to deal with - God the Father, a Father, a Mother and a Son.

Let us first focus on the Father. From all eternity the God of the Universe who had created us and loved us, was the God of justice, the God of love. By definition love, by definition a community of love where the Father has always loved, by definition. Always has never been alone. Always has been a community of love. Then this love brought us forth. But this God of love always gives us choices. So He set up decisions to make a choice to either be with Him or not be with Him. And through Eve and through Adam we chose we would rather do things our way than God's way and so He gave us our choice. But the great God of the universe didn't just let us. "If you sin you will die" as we talked about the other night. But He didn't just leave us there. He wanted us to be with Him. "So how can I fulfill My justice," He thinks. "I know, I will become one of them and I myself will fulfill My own justice." So of course in Christ, all of us, all of our sins, all of us who have chosen to do things our way, all of our sins are placed from God in Christ and He fulfills the judgment of justice of God and He brings us mercy. I will never forget when I was in seminary, I was in major seminary and we were reflecting on the Passion for one of the classes and one of the professors who I started to argue with because I don't take things just because someone says it, He says, "On the cross God became that which He is absolutely not. On the cross, in the death of Jesus God became that which He absolutely is not." I remember sitting there and my hand went right up and I started fighting with this guy. "How can God become something that He is not?" How can God become that which He is not? Now that is a philosophical thing, I understand, but here I am struggling and fighting with this man because He talked about relationship, the God of relationship, the God of love, when He dies and goes into non-relationship. So God becomes that which He is not. I am struggling with that and I will never forget the next line. He says, "So what happens is when you and I are baptized, we are baptized according to the scripture into what? We are baptized into His death." That is it. We are baptized into His death. Why we are baptized into the death of Christ if we are going to be brought to life? Because, this is what happens on Good Friday. This is what happened two thousand years ago. This is what happens for all eternity. When Jesus Christ died on the cross the Father who has such love for His son embraced His dead son. And in that non-relationship, in that death, in all that sin that was there, God's love was so powerful that He went against all that stuff and brought life out of it. So God the Father of love will never let go of His Son because if He was to let go of His Son, His Son would not exist. His Son, in His humanity, would cease to live. But see this is what's most important –when we are baptized into His death it is

not only Jesus that God the Father embraces, but He embraces who? Us and for God to let go of us He has to let go of Jesus. And He would never let go of Jesus because of His love which means He will never let go of us because of His love. The whole thing that happens when Christ dies and we are baptized into His death is exactly that. God's love is stronger than death. God would never let go of His Son, Jesus, and He will never let go of us. But, we have to remember what it cost God the Father, this day, to love us. It cost Him everything in His little boy.

Now we look at a mother. And we put the Pieta specifically out this year right into the front so we can focus on this reality of Mary holding her dead Son. If you ever meditate on this or anything, whether you see the one in Rome or any of the images of Mary holding her Son, you can see here how really the fullness of the weight of her Son is on her. She is holding His whole body on her lap. Her hand is embracing her Son, holding her Son, His dead body. As Mary holds her only Son in her arms and she wails and she feels the pain of that reality, again everything that happens to Jesus because we are baptized into His death, happens to us. Just as God the Father will never let us go, Mary our mother, will never let us go. She holds onto us as she holds onto Jesus. When we are going through the pain of our lives and we go through our struggles, the devil makes us think we are doing this by ourselves. I am all alone. I don't know how I am going to make it. You are never alone. God the Father never lets you go and Mary never stops supporting you. As she never stops supporting her Son, Mary never stops supporting you. She is always holding you up, praying for you, interceding for you, loving you because of Jesus. And so our job is to enter into that reality of knowing I am not alone and knowing that I am supported by a mother who loves me so much.

Finally we look at the Son, Christ and we focus on 2 of the 7 phrases that He said during the Passion. The first thing He does is looks up at His Father. He says a couple of things to His Father. The first thing was, "My God, My God, why have You abandoned Me? Why have You abandoned Me?" That the God of the Universe who is holding His Son as you see there, God the Father holding the crucifix, God the Father holding His Son, in the midst of it Jesus in His humanity could still cry out and feel the abandonment. Now we know when He said that psalm it ends with great hope. It was only the beginning of the psalm but it ends with a trust in the Father and Jesus had that trust. But He cried that out not only for Him but for us, for the same thing. That when you and I feel abandoned by God, and it happens, and if you have never felt abandoned, guess what? The days are coming, you will. If Christ could feel it, you and I will feel it. But He shows us the way out of it. That in the midst of the abandonment of our lives Christ gives us hope that when everything seems most dark and when everything seems like we can't go on, then Jesus Christ after and through it He can make that statement of faith to the Father, "Father into Your hands I commend My spirit." And so too with us to give us this example that when you and I when life is too heavy for us, when burdens feel too hard, when life gets out of control, when we feel abandoned, we need to do the same thing – "Father into Your hands I commend my spirit." Sometimes we have to do that many times in one day, "Father into Your hands I commend my spirit." And we surrender ourselves totally as Jesus totally surrendered Himself to the Father and then we can have some peace.

Finally we look at Jesus in the words He says to His mother, "Behold your son." And John took her into his care. Again if you want to live life at peace you have got to go to Mary and take Mary into your care. If Christ, and I can't even begin think about someone who doesn't have Mary in their life and there are many people that do. There are many that don't say the rosary, there are many people that don't do these things. Again, if you don't go to Mary first, as I said the other night, you reject the greatest gift God gave you and me. The last gift God gave us was "behold your mother." This is what the Son said. He said it to you. This Jesus Christ is looking to you from the cross, "behold your mother." And then John, who always represents us, took Mary into his care. We must take Mary into our care. And when we go to her she will never let us go. She will hold you. She will embrace you and she will get you through your suffering. She will get you through your struggle because she is your mother.

So this Good Friday let's reflect throughout this whole day on the Father's love, on the Mother's love, on the sacrifice of a Son who did everything He did for us so that we could live forever. And the only response to all that again and should not be guilt. You know when people feel guilty on Good Friday sometimes I just want to slap them and say get over it. You are completely missing the point. Too many Christians focus on just themselves and just my pain. Look what I have done to Jesus. And Jesus is saying, "Will you just get over that. That is why I died to get you over yourselves. That is why I gave up everything to so you could live." So will you live? And what it must evoke from all of us this day is gratitude. That what you and I need to be crying out today to God the Father thank You for giving up Your Son. To our mother, thank you for loving us so much and giving your Son for us. And to Jesus, thank You Lord that I was worth Your life. Jesus, since You gave your life for me may I live my life for You. As you gave Your life for me may I live my life for You. And when that finally happens then we will enjoy Easter. And we will become the Easter people that we are called to become. May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.