

FROM FATHER JOHN: *Our blessing-cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ. "In you, O LORD, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your justice rescue me. Into your hands I commend my spirit; you will redeem me, O LORD, O faithful God. For all my foes I am an object of reproach, a laughingstock to my neighbors, and a dread to my friends; they who see me abroad flee from me. I am forgotten like the unremembered dead; I am like a dish that is broken. But my trust is in you, O LORD; I say, 'You are my God. In your hands is my destiny; rescue me from the clutches of my enemies and my persecutors.' Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your kindness. Take courage and be stouthearted, all you who hope in the LORD."* ~ Psalm 31

Father, into your hands I commend my spirit!!!



Good Friday in the year of our Lord 2021.

We can't possibly imagine how much our Lord Jesus suffered for us, how horrible his death really was. The closest we can come is to read the scriptures and pray over the passion narrative. We can also watch a movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, to try to get some sense of the brutality that our Lord suffered.

There is this one scene in the movie when Jesus is scourged. They actually placed a shield on the back of the actor who played Jesus. The shield is hidden from view. But during one blow the Roman soldier missed the shield. The pain was so intense that the actor who portrayed our Lord Jesus could not even cry out, he lost his breath, and the shock was so much that he cut his hands on the chains holding him to the pillar. Afterwards, the make-up artist modeled the other wounds on his back after that real wound.

The Passion narrative reveals so many things to us. It reveals who Christ is; the Son of God, the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. Christ the King manifests a profound dignity in the face of torture, suffering and death. He shows dignity as the soldiers come to arrest him. He shows dignity in the face of hostile questioning. He shows dignity in his public trial in front of Pontius Pilate. He shows dignity in his crucifixion and he shows dignity in his death.

His dignity reveals to us that he was in control and that he freely sacrificed himself for us; to redeem us, to save us, to rescue us from a fallen world. He freely gave his life for us. They did not take his life away from him, rather, he gave his life to us and for us.

In the Passion narrative, we see how evil sin really is. But, more importantly, we see our God's definitive response to sin. We see our Lord and God suffering on the cross and continuing to love us with a love that is beyond all telling, beyond our wildest dreams. This is our God's response to sin. It is to love us completely and abundantly and without reservation.

This great love calls for a response. In His great love, God calls us to move away from sin and to return to His fold; to return to Him. This response looks like something.

We see what it looks like in the Passion narrative. It looks like St. John. The youngest of the apostles; but the one who stays by Jesus at the foot of the cross. The one who is faithful to the Lord to the bitter end. Even when Peter denied Him three times, when the other apostles, including his own older brother, fled out of fear; St. John remained with the Lord.

As we celebrate Good Friday, we realize that we have given up so much in the last year. A year ago, on Good Friday and Easter Sunday, our churches were closed. Our people couldn't receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus. There were no Easter Brunches and family celebrations. There were just so many things we couldn't do then and there are still some things we can't do now.

But, what we can always do, what we can do right now is this; we can respond to our God's great love. Just like St. John, we can remain with our Lord at the foot of the Cross. We may feel isolated or alone but we are not. Our Lord Jesus remains with us as He has always remained with us. Our God has manifested himself to us with dignity, with love, with compassion and with mercy.

Now, it's up to us to respond as St. John did; with dignity, with purpose, with commitment and with love.

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.

