

Good Friday 2010

The celebration of the Lord's passion consists of three parts: liturgy of the Word, Veneration of the Cross, and the reception of the Holy Communion.

I remember my home parish Pastor have said, if you don't participate in the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, you are not eligible or worthy for the celebration of the Easter or to experience the Risen Lord.

Try to see the three crosses on Golgotha. One on the right and another on the left were two criminals crucified. One died in sin, and the other died to sin. On the center cross Jesus died for our sins, for the sins of the world. While dying Jesus spoke seven times from the Cross-: those words were the last sermon of Jesus. The seven words from the cross speak volumes and volumes.

We have already heard these seven words from the Passion Reading today, yet I feel like repeating them.

- 1. The word of forgiveness:** *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"*
- 2. The word of assurance:** *"Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."*
- 3. The word of comfort:** When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, *"Woman, behold your son."* Then he said to the disciple, *"Behold, your mother."*
- 4. The word of desolation:** *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me."*
- 5. The word of suffering:** *"I thirst"*

6. The word of triumph: “*It is finished*”

7. The word of committal: Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”; and when he had said this he breathed his last:

Let us reflect together the first words from the cross:

“Father, forgive them, for they know not, what they do.”

Jesus was practicing what He preached - unconditional, forgiving love.

Jesus was asking his Heavenly Father to forgive his enemies, the soldiers, who have scourged him, mocked him, tortured him, and who have just nailed him to the cross. But could this not also apply to his Apostles who have deserted him, to Peter who has denied him three times? Could this not also apply to us, who often forget him in our lives?

Does he react angrily? No, he asks his Father to forgive them, because they are ignorant! At the height of his physical suffering, His Divine love prevails.

We have so many instances in the Gospel where Jesus speaks on forgiveness. Let me share with you a few of them:

Jesus teaches forgiveness in the Lord's prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Matthew 6:12). When asked by Peter, how many times should we forgive someone, Jesus answers seventy times seven (Matthew 18:21-22). At the Last Supper, Jesus explains his crucifixion to his Apostles when he tells them “this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:27-28). He forgives the paralytic at Capernaum (Mark 2:5), and many more. Again we see, even following his Resurrection, He commissioned his disciples to forgive, the Scriptural foundation for the Sacrament of Confession: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you

forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if they retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:22-23).

It is this model which the first Martyr Stephen followed (Acts 7:60). Archbishop Oscar Romero, the outspoken champion of the oppressed, said the same first word of Jesus from the cross, as he was shot dead at the altar. St. Cyprian gave gold coins as his farewell gift to his executioner, and St. Thomas More hugged and kissed his executioner. It was Christ's unconditional forgiveness which prompted the centurion in charge of Jesus' crucifixion to proclaim, "Truly he was the Son of God."

