

## Good Friday 2024 SFX

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you.  
For by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

One year I didn't get to the Good Friday liturgy. I was in Rome, and due to join the Seminarians at the English College for their beautiful liturgy. Instead, I spent Good Friday in the suburbs of Rome at the bedside of a Mexican sister in a very crowded Italian hospital. I missed the solemn liturgy, but in many ways Good Friday that year was more real, to be at the side of someone in pain. It is never easy being at the bedside of someone suffering, someone struggling, or even someone coming to their end.

No philosophy gives us an adequate answer to the problem of suffering, and the Gospel doesn't offer us pious platitudes or simple words about the struggles we go through in life. The Gospel doesn't do that because God doesn't do it. Because God becomes flesh. He doesn't just offer us words; he offers us his life. God doesn't just tell us that he loves us, he shows it on the Cross with arms outstretched.

We can't skip Good Friday any more than we can skip the reality of pain and suffering. Without the Good Friday of suffering, there is no Easter, without his death there is no resurrection. Jesus took upon himself the sins of the world, all the hatred that could be thrown at him, so that by his wounds we may be saved. We say it again and again: "Lamb of God [innocent spotless one] you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us."

Each one of us here is carrying some sort of cross. Whether it be some physical or emotional suffering, some personal or family issue, some setback in life, some grieving or loss. We offer sufferings to the Lord, whatever that may be. We bring before the Cross the pain of the world, war and devastation, hatred and injustice. We bring before him the sufferings of those we love, maybe a family member or a friend who might be bearing a cross heavier than our own.

We come today, each of us, individually, to make our own personal act of reverence, veneration before the Cross on which hung the salvation of the world. We have a High Priest who knows our weaknesses. As the letter to the Hebrews says: *"Let us be confident, then, in approaching the throne of grace, that we shall have mercy from him and find grace when we are in need of help."* As we come forward, let us ask the Lord for what we need now.

I think of the lovely Pope John XXIII whose last days were painful as he struggled privately with the stomach cancer that would kill him. The mystery of the Cross was central to his spirituality. He applied to himself the words of the *Stabat Mater*: *"Make me feel your wounds", "Make me love your cross" ... "here I have not arrived, but at least I am not lacking in desire"* he said.

Just before he died the good Pope confided to a friend: *"The secret of my ministry is in that crucifix you see opposite my bed. It's there so that I can see it in my first waking moment and before going to sleep. It's there, also, so that I can talk to it during the long evening hours. Look at it. See it as I see it. Those open arms have been the program of my pontificate: They say that Christ died for all... for all. No one is excluded from his love, from his forgiveness."*

*Let us be confident, then, in approaching the throne of grace.*

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you.*

*For by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*