

HOMILY - GOOD FRIDAY - 2007

Today we reflect on and worship what St. Paul calls a scandal to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles. After all, the Jews understood well the glory and majesty of the all-powerful God, enthroned above all praises, before whom even the angels veil their faces. How can it be that Jesus Christ, who is the all-holy God, learned obedience and became perfect, as the letter to the Hebrews says, through the shame of the Cross? And to the worldly wise, as the Greeks were, how can this instrument of horrible death be the means of triumph, this greatest injustice possible be part of the divine plan for righteousness? How can the all-powerful God be killed on a Cross? It is astonishing and defies ordinary human understanding.

And yet, when seen rightly, it is only fitting, and needed for all righteousness. For, what do we understand to be the greatest act of human love? Is not to offer one's life for another, and finally to die for another? Greater love than this hath no man. The man who offers his life for his lady, the mother who offers her life for her children, the patriot for his country, the hero for justice, the martyr who dies for the faith. Are such things not the supreme show of love? And is it to be said that such acts of love are allowed to us, but not to God?

Or, to put it in another way, is it to be said that we participate in God's nature in every other sense, but not in the highest act of love? By work, we participate in God's creativity, by art, music, and literature in God's beauty, by thinking in God's knowledge, by prayer in His holiness. Is it to be said, however, that when we offer our whole life for another, and when one dies for another, we are not participating in anything God has done?

Forbid it Almighty God! God has forbidden it. God has made sure that He joins us, and we join Him, in the greatest offering of love. He has done so with an acting with a power that staggers the mind, an act of power greater than creation itself, and act of power that we could not understand without faith, the power to die for sinners, the power to die for love of us, a love so powerful that it overcomes even death and blazes the way to everlasting life.