

“THE PRIVILEGED PLACE”

GOOD FRIDAY 2023

FOR FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2023 – ST. PATRICK CATHOLIC CHURCH

We cannot turn back time,
and walk where he walked,
carefully fitting our steps
into his.

We cannot turn back time,
and watch,
our throats tight
with wonder and fear,
as Lazarus tears off his shroud
and stumbles out of the tomb.

We cannot turn back time,
and stand anxiously beside Pilate,
wringing our hands
while he washes his.

Even in our deepest suffering,
we cannot turn back time,
and leap across the void
to sail with him along the Sea of Galilee.

And yet, strangely,
the cross—
that Roman instrument of torture and shame,
has allowed us to do much more
than simply turn back time.
It allows us to transcend time—
to shatter it completely.

St. John Paul II once said,
*“We are invited to look upon the cross.
It is the “privileged place”
where the love of God is revealed ...
On the cross,
human misery and divine mercy meet.*

*The cross is planted in the earth
and would seem to extend its roots
in human malice--
but it reaches up,
pointing to the heavens,
pointing to the goodness of God.*

*By means of the cross of Christ,
the Evil One has been defeated,
death is overcome,
life is given to us,
hope is restored,
light is imparted.” **

Today above all days, we remember the cross.

Standing before the cross
we stand in that privileged place of
both horror and hope;
pain and promise
ending and beginning,
death and life.

Today, we will look upon the cross,
and stand close enough to its rough beams
to feel its shadow across our face.

Standing close to the cross
changes our perspective.
It sharpens our gaze and broadens our view.

The closer we stand to the cross,
the more we can see
a vision of the people we are called to be.
The closer we stand to the cross,
the more clearly
we can hear God calling our names,
and naming our vocations.

When we stand close to the cross
there are things
we can no longer say about ourselves
or our sisters and brothers. **

When we stand close to the cross
there are actions we can no longer take,
words we can no longer use,
possessions and attitudes
that no longer satisfy.

When we stand at the foot of the cross,
forgiveness becomes possible,
mercy and healing become real,
and death itself is transformed.

When we stand at the foot of the cross,
we are invited to see the world,
broken and blessed,
through God's own eyes.

Ever since Salvador Dali's painting,
"Christ of Saint John of the Cross"
was first exhibited in 1952,
it has evoked admiration,
criticism,
controversy.

The viewer looks down
from a perspective high above
the bowed head and outstretched arms
of the crucified Lord.

From that perspective—
some say,
the perspective of God—
the eye is drawn to the foot of the cross
plunged deep into the earth,
plunged deep into the Sea of Galilee
where an empty boat awaits.

***For God so loved the world
that he gave his only Son, so that everyone
who believes in him might not perish
but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world
to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. ******

This passage from St. John has been called
"The Gospel in miniature."
Because it's our whole story--
our whole future--
is contained in these few words.
God loves us.
God invites us.
God saves us.

My dear sisters and brothers:
Stay close to the cross,
plunged deep into the earth;
for it is the place where
human misery and divine mercy meet.

Stay close to the cross,
plunged deep into Calvary,
for it is the place
God offers us his greatest gift.

Stay close to the cross,
plunged deep into our lives,
for it is the place where
sin,
sorrow,
and time itself are transformed.

Stay close to the cross,
for in its shadow,
death is destroyed forever.

Drawn from the work of Susan Fleming McGurgan - 2023
**Pope John Paul II Excerpts from homily September 14, 2003*
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**** John 3:16-17*