

GOOD FRIDAY: April 7th 2023

'All the light of Sacred Story'

Jn. 18: 1-19-42

“Behold the wood of the cross, on which was hung the Saviour of the World”, Fr. Peter will acclaim on behalf of us all a few moments from now. Today, Good Friday, we are invited to look deeply and directly into the face of torture and death, and to come and worship.

What else can we do? What else is there to be said? Are we not to drink the cup that the Father has given us, and share in the Son's sufferings, in order that becoming like him in a death like his, we might also enter into the glory of so amazing a resurrection as shall be his?

Yet the thing surpasses understanding; it is cruel; it is barbarous; it is inhumane and reprehensible. What comes out of the mouths of the baying crowd; what is performed at the defiled hands of Pilate and his henchmen is abominable in its wickedness and its grotesque abnegation of humanity. We are not able to compute it, are we?

“Behold the wood of the cross”. But for such a nucleus of suffering as is hanged and held here, then perhaps not. But the outstretched arms we see before us in perpetuity today, as though for the first time, proffer a different answer, an eternal word. A wisdom and epiphany for which Pilate can only flail in the shadow of half-light as he struggles to find arguments and a better discourse for the condemnation of the God-man.

We, however, see the target, the solution, the computation, the full remembrance of our sins immortalised in this entire and whole and perfect gift of the Father, in whose broken Son we also see ourselves broken and offered in a similar way, so that all the dimness of refracted light in us, bound in night though it may yet be, still makes the abounding grace of the Godhead visible, gathering up all things into the loving mercy of the unseen God, the Word – Jesus who is not unknown to us, but loved infinitely and beyond measure because he is himself the very measure and pledge of love; lighting the way, repairing the breach, unblocking the chasm, restoring streets to live in.

It is not understandable, but it is endlessly relatable and shareable – and through it – through this incredibly human gift of the divine - every sin will be forgiven, tears cannot but stream down like rain, and very many souls be saved forever.

And chink by chink, bit by bit, little by little, we can compute it, we can take it in; we are able, as God in Christ is able to be taken for us into Godself, and continues to be taken there, even as he is displayed upon every cross from which passion of every sort yet cries out: in the shelled cities of Ukraine, in the starved places of Yemen and those places of the world forgotten by the media; in the pandemic as it continues to affect the vulnerable, the poor and those contending with hidden situations of all kinds. We behold the wood of the cross, and worship its perversity today with all our heart and strength and mind because thereon pleads the totality of love's self crucified, that he might bring life and immortality outside the slavery of sin, and emancipate them in the refining fire of his marvellous light. And that emancipation frees us too, in all our imprisonment of spirit: our chains fall off, we see the truth, and the truth hurts. But living in the purgative light of the truth makes us free indeed.

Today, we call Good Friday, when all the saints of God worship in all this light of our sacred story once again, as we gather round its head sublime and wait in his agony for the sanctification of everyman's pain and pleasure to come upon us in the foolish glory of the wondrous cross.

AMEN