



Siena Bronze, 21st cent.

FRIDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

In the far back reaches of the Third Edition of the Roman Missal, there are several sets of petitions that might be used for the Universal Prayer at Mass. One of the sets for Lent has a petition which reads “That all of us may learn to distribute the fruits of self-denial for the good of those in need.”

Whatever it is we endure, whether it is a self-chosen Lenten discipline, or a hardship imposed upon us, there is always this conflict between self-assertion (Why is this happening to me? Why should I go through this? It’s not right that I should have to put up with this! And on and on it goes) and a gracious self-surrender that, in truth, is the heart’s opening to discern how to take what’s happening and let it be in the service of some good larger than my ego.

It is the “original sin,” if you will, the conflict in us that pits self-willfulness against God’s will for us. And this sin is overcome in Jesus’ saving Passion.

With Holy Thursday’s focus on Eucharist, we enter into the mystery of Jesus’ thanksgiving to his Father. And that just hours before his death on a cross. He takes what is happening to him and makes what is happening to him an acceptable sacrifice.

With Good Friday, we behold Jesus’ arms outstretched, we behold him give over his spirit. What do these mean? Well, it is his embrace of all of us, it is his empowerment of all of us. Jesus didn’t offer an acceptable sacrifice the evening before just for his own sake, like some kind of self-insurance to claim when death comes. He offered it for us, that we might be gathered in him, that we might live in his Spirit. He is, if you will, distributing the fruits of his self-denial for the good of those in need. In his store of graces, there is more than plenty for you and me.

But not just for you and me. Indeed, he calls us to join him, to add any good merit we might work to his superabundant merits. That we too offer acceptable sacrifices for the good of those in need...of forgiveness, of salvation, of healing grace. This is what Christians know they are doing, whatever it is we endure, whatever it is happening to us: to be co-workers with Christ.

I have tried to say it many times in earlier messages, but let me make the connection again: the suspension of public worship in this time of pandemic is not to be seen as an infringement upon my rights, or your rights. It is good, and necessary, precaution for the common good. It is Christ-like, it is Christian. In a perfect world we could worship as we wish, but a time of pandemic is far from perfect. And our worship would only be “perfect” if it were continually forming us as servants of the common good. To be Christ’s compassion – a word meaning we’re in this together.

May God Bless,
Fr. Grogan