

## *Dear Parishioners,*

As we approach Holy Week we ponder upon what the sacrifice of the Son of the living God really means for us. For Catholics, as well as for those in the world who are unaware, this is the holiest time of the year, and the time in which reflection, understanding, and thanksgiving is most apt.

Our insignificance before the living God cannot be understated. He the Creator, we the created; He the Author, we a character among many in the story of life; He immeasurable in every way, we finite and limited; He immortal, we mortal; He holy, we sinners. Yet, despite all the disparity, He inconceivably loves us. We are unworthy in every way, yet he created us, blessed us with looks, talents, opportunities, and offers Heaven to us. I encourage you to take the time to let mystery of God's love sink into the depths of your heart during Holy Week.

Above all, I encourage you to make a daily spiritual practice of gazing upon the Crucified for five minutes. You don't have to say much. Just imitate Psalm. 46:10 which says, "Be still, and know that I am God". Beyond the mystery of God's blessings for our life is the mystery of His love which put Christ, His Son, upon the torture device of the Cross for our sake. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16). For you He did this. If you were the only sinner in the world at that time, would he still have done so? Yes. Such is the madness of God's love. It is a love beyond comprehension and reason. Which is why Catholics have always had Crucifixes in their homes, displaying them in a place of prominence and honour. Gazing upon the Crucified helps to let this unfathomable Divine love penetrate through the darkness of sin, the ignorance of humanity, the arrogance of pride, and the shame of sin. "Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5-8). Ponder deeply during this sacred time of the year upon the immense love of God which put Christ upon the cross so that Heaven may be open to you.

After Good Friday, the day on which our Saviour died, we are given to contemplate the finality of death and judgement. We will all die and come before the Just Judge. We have the merits of the Crucified to plead our cause, but we should not become complacent. There is a danger of presuming upon the mercy of God. We must instead seek to be prepared, like the wise and prudent virgins (cf. Mt. 25) for the return of our Master. The best way to do so is to remain in a State of Grace...that is, with no mortal sin on soul. "Be holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy" (Lev. 19:2), and, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thes. 4:3). As challenging as a holy way of life may be, if we live it, we will attain the eternal bliss we were created for. How is your state of life? If God called you to the Judgement Seat today, would you get into Heaven? If you have any hesitation, what in your life needs to change?

After pondering on the certainty of death, we rejoice in knowing that, in Christ, we will rise again.

"Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will

sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:51:58)

Because Christ Jesus rose from the dead he has broken the power that death had over us. If we live in Him, we will live forever. Speaking of the reality of bodily resurrection and of eternal life Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die” (Jn. 11:25-26).

I was remembering the words of a song recently... “Forever young. I want to be forever young...” They speak of the desire in all our hearts for a life that is vibrant and strong. I think it resonates in most, if not all of our hearts. Yet, it really makes me think. Do I want to live forever in this world? In all honesty, when looking at the fallen nature of earthly life, I have to answer “no”. I do not desire an eternal life in which there is pain and suffering, brokenness and shame, heartbreak and sorrow, etc. That would be a horrible eternity. I assume that sober reflection on the reality of earthly existence makes all people feel the same. Which is why Christ’s victory over sin and death is so powerful and amazing! He said in Jn. 10:10-11, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”. He offers us what no other can...to see the face of the Living God, to hear his voice, to know and live in his will, and to behold his glory in timeless beatitude. As St Paul tells us in Phil. 3:20, “our citizenship is in heaven”. And, as such we keep our gaze fixed on our eternal home with great hope and expectation.

In a time on anxiety I encourage you to take to prayer the following Scripture passages:

Matthew 6:25-34

Matthew 8

Isaiah 40:31

Isaiah 41:10

Proverbs 3:5-6

Romans 8:35-39

Philippians 4:3-7

Keep your eyes on Christ. Worship Him during this most holy time. Do reparation for your sins. Trust Him and let Him be God.

*You are daily in my prayers!*

*Fr. Matthew Chojna*