



19 April 2019, 6.30 p.m. | **GOOD FRIDAY** (Year C)

Celebration of the Lord's Passion

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 | Psalm 31 | Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9 |
John 18:1-19:42

'IT IS FINISHED'

Homily

My dear sisters and brothers, after hearing the beautiful proclamation of the gospel in song, there is so much to reflect over. We could spend hours and days trying to assimilate the message of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

I'd like to begin with a personal experience: When I was a schoolboy, more than sixty years ago (you may try to guess my age), my father passed away. What remains fixed in my mind is my last encounter with him. He was leaving for the hospital that morning, and he called me and said a few things to me. But most of all, I remember that he gave me his blessing. Ever since then, I have continued to experience this last interaction as an encounter of blessing.

All of us who have lost a dear one, a beloved person, a friend or a family member will probably remember the last words spoken by that person. Today, as a community, we heard the gospel, and I would like to invite you to remember and reflect over this last word of Jesus, 'It is finished'.

What did Jesus mean when he said, 'It is finished'? It could mean that it is ended, it is over – finished and done with it. By this, did Jesus mean that his experience of suffering and death was disposed of? No. When we read the scriptures, we realise that a better translation would say, 'It is accomplished'. It is achieved. Jesus then did not just finish with the Passion. He accomplished something, he fulfilled something – and that fulfilment was final.

The Greek word for 'fulfilled' is *teléō* (τέλειος). It also means to be completed or achieved. This is what Jesus communicates as his last message, not just to Christians but to the whole of humanity – people of all faiths, people who listen, people who do not listen, people of today and people of all ages to come. He has completed something for us – for you and for me. So, we do not need to try to strive again to achieve it because Jesus, through his life, suffering and death, has already achieved it for us.

What has Jesus achieved? I'd like to spell it out in three points. The first is: Jesus accomplished the will of the Father. The second is: To achieve this, it cost Jesus a tremendous price. The third point is: What Jesus has achieved is for each one of us and for people of all places, all faiths and all time.

Jesus achieved and fulfilled the will of the Father. This was not only at the end, but right through his earthly life, beginning with the incarnation. He became fully like us, not just wearing a garment that was human, but becoming a human being while also remaining divine. We see in the scriptures that even as a young boy in the temple, Jesus says, 'Did I not come to do the will of my Father?' So, right from the start, Jesus' focus was already on doing the will of the Father, and he did it right through his life. We see as we read the Passion narrative, that in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus' prayer was basically an affirmation: 'Not my will but yours be done'. He prays this when he is experiencing total distress – distress to the point of death, the gospel says. At that point, Jesus prays, 'Father, if it is possible, take this cup away from me, but not my will but yours be done'. That clause changes everything – 'Not my will but yours be done'. And then, he went resolutely to his Passion in order to do the will of his Father, and to achieve for us what he did.

Jesus is seen constantly praying during his life. What is he praying? He is discerning the will of the Father. When he had to choose his disciples, he prayed and asked the Father whom he should choose. All of us have to ruthlessly search and do the will of the Father: only then can our lives be successful. There are so many people whose lives seem to have innumerable burdens, one after the other. But those who make a decision to seek the will of God in their lives are seen to make a breakthrough. Their lives begin to be successful.

I have often sat and listened to alcoholics, and many of them—almost all of them—share that the moment they surrender themselves to this higher power that they call ‘God’, they receive the power of God to make their efforts successful in breaking free from their addiction.

Have I aligned my will to the will of God? If my life is stuck, if I’m not experiencing success—whether it is to overcome sin or a problem in life—if I identify with the will of the Father, I will meet with success. That is an absolute certainty.

Jesus accomplished this at a cost. Very recently, I read on social media an interesting story of a young boy who trapped some birds in a cage and was playing with them and teasing them. A pastor happened to come by and saw this little boy irritating the birds. He asked the boy, ‘What are you doing?’ The boy replied, ‘I’m having fun with these birds, as they are mine’. The pastor asked him, ‘Can I buy them from you?’ The boy thought that he could make a little money, and so he replied, ‘Yes, I will sell the birds and the cage to you for ten dollars’. The pastor gave the boy the money, took the birdcage to the top of a hill and released the birds. Then, he continued walking to his church with the empty cage. During his homily, he placed the cage in front for all to see and narrated a conversation between Jesus and Satan. Satan, in a sense, represented by the little boy, plays with the lives of people, making them sin and enjoying watching them suffer. Jesus asks, ‘What do I need to pay in order to get back these people?’ Satan replies, ‘You will have to pay with your whole life and with every drop of your blood’. And Jesus willingly complied. That was the price Jesus paid for each one of us. And so, if I experience my sin, Jesus says, ‘Nail it on the cross’. If I experience my sinfulness, Jesus says, ‘Nail it on the cross. I have paid the price. You need now to cooperate with me and you will be saved’.

Dear sisters and brothers, this Good Friday, the Lord Jesus is saying to each one of us, ‘I have paid the price with my very last drop of blood because **I love you**. I want to save you; I want to redeem you from your sins’. We need to say our ‘yes’ to him, and that will change our lives.

The final point is: Jesus has achieved for us the results of his death on the Cross. What are these results? The gospels describe the scene when the temple veil is torn from top to bottom, giving us access to God. Because of the life, suffering and death of Jesus, we can now see the face of God and experience his mercy and love. Let us open ourselves to him.

What else did Jesus give us? He saw his mother and his beloved disciple at the foot of the cross. He said to his mother, ‘This is your son’, and to the beloved disciple, ‘This is your mother’, and they became mother and son to each other. Jesus gave his mother, not to Peter, the head of the Church, but to the beloved disciple. Jesus gives us his mother at the cross in the midst of suffering. In order to receive Mother Mary into our lives, we too need to say ‘yes’ to God, as she did.

This evening, dear sisters and brothers, I appeal to each one of you—I appeal also to myself—that we might submit our lives to the Lord, because he has achieved for us a saving action that cost him everything, and that will make our lives beautiful and meaningful. This is the transforming effect of the suffering and death of Jesus for each one of us. Many of us have engaged in our community Stations of the Cross, when we stuck our sufferings to the crucifixes. Jesus invites each one of us to place our sins, our burdens, our wounds on the cross, and through his wounds we are healed. Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer

We prepare ourselves to receive the Lord Jesus in Holy Communion. Jesus has opened a new relationship with the Father. And so, with confidence, we can pray, Our Father...

Post Communion Message

Being Good Friday, we usually have in the congregation a number of people of other faiths, and also people of our own faith who come occasionally to church. I would say to everybody, especially to those who have come just today because it is Good Friday: You are part of our church family, and we appreciate your presence here. We would like to invite you to participate in the church in different ways. Our church is very vibrant – it is a church that would like to serve. We are also a church that is wounded and in need of the Lord's forgiveness and blessings. And so, in case you have left the church for some reason or the other, on behalf of the church and of the people of God, I'd like to apologise to each one of you who could be wounded and are staying away from the church. Please come back to the church. You belong to the church, and the church belongs to you.



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