



ASSUMPTION

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RESURRECTION

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Good Friday

10 April 2020

Dear Parishioners,

Good Friday is the day we commemorate the saving Passion of Our Lord. The Passion refers to Jesus as one who suffers, as one undergoing suffering. We use the word “passion” in this context in its original meaning of “submitting to”, as when, in English, we use the phrase “he or she is very passive”. Jesus willingly *submitted* to this final act of his earthly life: “Not mine, but thy will be done”.

In recent times in the Church, we often emphasise the Resurrection of Our Lord, which completed his saving act through a divine power by which he raised himself from death.

But, during this time of pandemic, it is perhaps not without meaning to cast our glance backwards to another period of great suffering for human beings, at least in Europe, the periods of the great plagues that were known as the “Black Death”. It was during this time (beginning in the 1300s) that almost a third of European population was decimated and society underwent radical changes with the loss of so many lives. Things could not return to “as they were”. There was no “reset” button to push once the plague was passed.

In the face of so much suffering and uncertainty, in the realisation that things could not carry on as they had, Christians found solace in the image of the suffering Christ. It was during this time that



Christian piety turned in particular to the image of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Many altars and many shrines were built containing an image or a reproduction in life-size statutes of Jesus with the three disciples Peter, James and John, waiting in the Garden of Olives for the arrival of the guards who would lead Jesus to his death, betrayed by the kiss of Judas. A carving from the former High Altar in St. Mary’s Church in Berlin is shown here with that scene. It was carved around the year 1470. People were largely illiterate in those days, but they could “read” the Passion of Jesus in these artistic works that appeared in great numbers throughout Germany especially during this time. The suffering people could identify with the Passion of Jesus, the ultimate sign of his love for his creatures caught in the sorrowful events through which they were living.

Good Friday is a time to remember that the Resurrection is our great hope, but it does not come without its own cost. To get to Easter Sunday, one must pass through Good Friday. There could be no resurrection if there were no death.

This year, the Holy Father has added a special prayer to the Good Friday service, during the great prayers that are always sung at this time called the Solemn Intercessions. A prayer reminds us of our relationship to God and of our need to turn to him. This new prayer is particular for all those suffering from the effects of the pandemic which has seized our time, and set our sense of security and stability on edge:

Almighty ever-living God,
only support of our human weakness,
look with compassion upon the sorrowful condition of your children
who suffer because of this pandemic;
relieve the pain of the sick,
give strength to those who care for them,
welcome into your peace those who have died
and, throughout this time of tribulation,
grant that we may all find comfort in your merciful love.
Through Christ our Lord.

May God bless you as we walk the final steps of our Holy Week.

Fr. Philip Creurer
Pastor