

The Rev. Daren J. Zehnle
Annunciation Parish, Shumway, Illinois
10 April 2009

Good Friday of the Lord's Passion

My brothers and sisters,

What response can be adequately offered in return to the love of Jesus Christ, so freely and willingly given for us? If because of him - and because of his Cross - "kings shall stand speechless," what is our proper response (Isaiah 52:15)?

Throughout his account of the Passion of the Lord, Saint John emphasizes time and again Jesus' complete control of the events surrounding his death, but the disciples continually fail to see this.

For this reason, Simon Peter "struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his ear" (John 18:10). Peter looked for a way out of the suffering in which he found himself, and the suffering that he must have known Jesus would endure. Do we not seek the same?

The Cross comes to you and to me in so many various forms, and, whereas the Lord tell us to take it up daily, we too often seek to escape it (cf. Luke 9:23).

To Peter's action, Jesus says to him, "Put your sword into its scabbard. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father gave me" (John 18:11)?

My dear friends, if we desire to be followers of Christ, we must follow him in all things, even - and especially - to the Cross. Our only hope is found in the Cross and to it we must run to stand beneath its shadow with Mary in confident hope and trust (cf. John 19:25).

Doing so is not easy, but where else are we to turn? Peter turned to the ways of this world and found neither freedom nor escape; we will only find true freedom in the Cross. This is way Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Edith Stein, who died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, said, "Human activities cannot help us, but only the suffering of Christ. It is my desire to share in it."

Let each of us this night be filled this night with silent awe when we behold the wood of the Cross, on which was hung our salvation. "Let no one be ashamed of the Cross, the honored symbol of our salvation. It is the best of all good things, through which we live, through which we have become who we are. So let us carry around the Cross of Christ as a crown."¹

¹ Saint John Chrysostom, 54th Homily on the Gospel of Matthew, in *The Catholic Answer* (date and issue uncertain), 28.