

Rev. Donato Infante III
Good Friday 2019

Mark Tripoldi speaks about his faith journey. In May of 2000, his and his wife Christi's only son was taken to the hospital while sick. 22 hours later, he and his wife returned home without Bobby, who died at age 3. He recounts that one day he was yelling at God, "Why, God? Why me? I don't understand." This voice spoke deep within his heart, "I know. I know what you're going through. I know. I lost a son, too. My son died, too. Do not waste this pain." He and his wife founded the Cornerstone of Hope, a center for those who grieve the loss of a loved one.

Reflecting on the passion, Saint Thomas Aquinas says that while Christ did not endure every type of suffering, he has suffered more than anyone. Sure, he might know not exactly what it feels like to die of this or that particular illness, but he knows what it is like to be rejected by his own people and the people of other nations, to be misunderstood by friends and family, and to be betrayed by a friend. He knows what it is like to have insults lobbed at him, to have his reputation destroyed by false accusation, and to have friends flee in a time of need. He knows what it is like to be stripped naked in front of everyone and mocked, to be sad, weary, and afraid. He knows what it is like to be beaten and scourged, crowned with thorns, be pierced in hands and feet, be beaten, spit upon, and whipped. He knows what it is like to be given vinegar and gall to drink, to be surrounded by death, and to see his mother, broken-hearted, crying.

As we say in the Stations of the Cross from Lamentations, "O all you who pass by the way look, and see if there be any sorrow like My sorrow."

Who is this God who does this to himself? He is Love. The Cross is the ultimate sign of love for us. This was no mistake. This was Jesus entering into his glory. He was being enthroned. Being lifted on the cross is taking possession of the throne. It is that by which the ruler of this world, the Evil One, is cast out, and the means by which he draws everyone to himself.

Our God is not Zeus who becomes jealous of what we have and interferes to take it back. Our God is not Baal of the Celts who wanted child offerings. Our God is not Toci who wanted the sacrifice of women. No, instead God sacrifices himself. He makes himself approachable:

"For we do not have a high priest
who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,
but one who has similarly been tested in every way,
yet without sin.

So let us confidently approach the throne of grace
to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help."

Whatever it is we have done, whatever it is that we are going through, whatever it is that tempts us, God wants us to draw near: to draw near to him in prayer to beg for his grace, to draw near to him in the confessional to receive the infinite gift of his mercy, to draw near the body sacrifice for us to be our food and our strength.

This is our King. This is our God. Come let us worship.