

John 18.1-19.42 Good Friday '20

Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Could any words speak more directly to our current conditions than these? *Let us approach the throne of grace.* What is this throne of grace if not the cross of Jesus Christ which we celebrate this day? Strange isn't it? We 'celebrate' a most horrific event; nowhere else would we ever consider celebrating an event so unjust, so cruel. Instead, we would



condemn it, hold it up as an event to be avoided at all costs. Yet, we celebrate the cross of Jesus, we reverence it, call it the Holy Cross because *by his wounds we are healed.* We celebrate it, we honor it, we

reverence it because it is the means of our salvation. Jesus came to tell us of the great and wonderful love the Father has for each one of us, a love that reaches out to every person, no matter his/her social status, no matter his/her wealth, no matter his/her goodness: God reaches out to each and every one of us without distinction.

However, that message threatened some people who thought that it would mean some kind of loss for them, and as a result we have what we celebrate today, Jesus dying on a cross because he would not swerve from witnessing to the truth of the Father's love and of God's desire to share life with us. Jesus' faithfulness and self-offering of his life make his cross *the throne of grace* for us. Jesus reigns from the cross, not as a sign of death but as the source of life. So yes, indeed, we should approach it with *boldness*, but not a boldness that is brash and reckless, not a boldness born of entitlement, but with a boldness that shows a humble

confidence in God's love for us. We do so with the greatest of humility, a humility that is one with the humility of Jesus who prayed, *yet not what I want, but what you want.*

And what is it that God wants for us, *that we may receive mercy?* Mercy, forgiveness for the wrongs that we do to God and to one another; God's deepest, in fact, his only desire, is that we seek to be close to God and to one another, and we do that by living lives as free of sin as we can. Today we approach the cross, we reverence the Cross, asking God to forgive us of any and all wrongs that we have committed, and we do so because Jesus took all of those wrongs, those sins, upon himself, paid the price for us, ransomed us from sin and spiritual death, gives us new life, as the new and definitive Passover Lamb.

If we ask God for mercy, we will *find grace to help in time of need*, grace - God's help and God's strength. We need God's help all the time, but now especially in this time of covid-19? So whether we are front-line workers, essential workers, workers at home or on the job site, workers who are laid-off, people worrying and struggling with finances, individuals living this experience by ourselves, youth whose activities and gatherings have all come to a halt, or the children who cannot meet and play with their friends, no matter who we are, we ask for God's grace to see the world through this crisis, to help us carry this cross, and all our crosses, as Jesus carried his, in humble, sacrificial love. Jesus invites us, *take up your cross and follow me.*

Fr. Charlie