

Good Friday of the Lord's Passion + 3 April 2026 + Isa 52 + Heb 4 + Jn 18-19:42

It's important to recall that the Sacred Triduum, or "three days", is really one liturgy divided only by time; liturgies that allow us to enter into the most important events in the history of this world, that form our very identity as Catholics. Last night, we gathered with the Lord in the upper room, where Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, and then instituted the Most Holy Eucharist. We heard St. John so powerfully frame these events in his Gospel by saying that Jesus "*loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end.*" Today, we will begin to see exactly what *love to the end* looks like.

As we said last night, Jesus loved His own every moment of His life: in all of His teachings, His miracles, His enduring the hatred of others'—it was all *for us*. He gained nothing for Himself; it was pure love. And yet His love would go even further. It was not enough even for Jesus to institute the Last Supper. His words, "*this is my body, this is my blood...for you*" would remain without real meaning or purpose if they were merely symbolic. No, these events are only the beginning; they give words to, and prepare for, His final Passing-over, His *love to the end*.

So how does the Cross of Christ reveal to us the depths of God's love? To fully answer that question, we'd be here all day. But in a nutshell, we know that the Cross of Christ saves us from our sins. Meaning; it unmask that original lie of the devil that God is not our good Father and He cannot be trusted. It repairs the damage done when we believe and act according to this lie, and finally, it opens up a path to conquer the ultimate consequence of sin: and that is death. Let's look briefly at each of these.

First, it unmask that fundamental lie that satan used on Adam and Eve and on all of us ever since: that God is not our good Father, that we cannot trust Him, and that He is holding back on us. How so? On the Cross, the very heart of the Father is laid bare through the image of His Son, which is a heart of love. As John writes: *God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son* (3:16). Jesus willingly hands Himself over to the wrath of sinful men, who lie about Him, beat him, condemn him, and finally put him to death, naked with arms outstretched, on the Cross. He is laying it all out there: that God has held nothing back from us for Himself: rather, He has given us everything. Even His own Son. He'll even die for us. *Greater love has no one than this, Jesus says, than to lay down one's life for His friends* (15:13). This was the Father's plan all along, as the Prophet Isaiah foretold so long ago as in our 1st reading: *if he gives his life as an offering for sin...the will of the LORD shall be accomplished through him.*

Next, on the Cross, Jesus "undoes," or "atones for" the damage done by our sins. Sin is ultimately choosing our own way, choosing ourselves, over God our Creator and loving

Father. This choice necessarily means separation from God. And the very nature of this choice is that it enslaves us. It traps us in a cycle of “looking for love in all the wrong places”—place that never really satisfy. They only satisfy us for a moment, just enough to leave us wanting more, ultimately addicted. It’s a long road down a black hole, and along the way we do untold damage to ourselves and others—evil that cannot go unanswered. It’s a life of living death that ends in death, the natural consequence of separation from God, the author and giver of life (cf. Heb 2:15). The only One who can bring us out of that hole is God Himself. So what does God do about all this?

As we said last Advent, He goes on a rescue mission. God takes on our human nature in Christ His Son. He takes on all of our unbelief by showing us that He can be trusted. He takes on the slavery of our disobedience and shows us the true freedom of obedience to the will of the Father. And finally, yes, He takes on the guilt of our offenses, and He takes our just punishment. He takes all of this upon Himself on the Cross, and He dies, in his human nature. But as true God, He also pronounces divine mercy: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*. The only logical reason *why* He would do this is because He loves us. And He *loves us to the end* (Jn 13:1).

A further important point needs to be made here: the cross is not the blazing wrath of the Father somehow being appeased by the brutalizing and death of His Son. Remember, Jesus says earlier in John’s Gospel, *the Father and I are one* (10:30), and *anyone who has seen me has seen the Father* (14:9). So, if the heart of Jesus is a heart of love to the end, then He is only revealing the same heart of the Father for the Son, and for all of us. Listen to Pope Benedict XVI on this point:

In some parts of Germany there was a very moving devotion that contemplated the “poverty of God”...that makes pass before [our] eyes an...image representing the suffering Father, who, as Father, shares inwardly the sufferings of the Son...the Father supports the cross and the Crucified, bends lovingly over him and the two are, as it were, together on the cross. So in a grand...way, one perceives there what God’s mercy means... It is not a matter of a cruel justice, not a matter of the Father’s fanaticism, but rather of the truth and the reality of creation: the true...overcoming of evil that ultimately can be realized only in the suffering of love.¹

Finally, Jesus cries out “*It is finished*”: love to the end. And He is buried in a garden. Man, once banished from the garden, destined to die, returns to the garden. But as we will see tomorrow, death cannot hold him anymore. For God will triumph over death.

¹ cf. <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2016/03/17/full-text-of-benedict-xvis-recent-rare-and-lengthy-interview/>