

Good Friday's Tree

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Shared by Tami Hopwood Turk

"I know a person to whom our Lord wanted to show what a soul in mortal sin was like. That person says that in her opinion if this were understood even though a soul would have to undergo the greatest trials imaginable in order to flee the occasions. So the Lord gave her a strong desire that all might understand this. May he give you, daughters, the desire to beseech Him earnestly for those who are in the state, who have become total darkness, and whose works have become darkness also. For just as all the streams that flow from a crystal-clear fount are also clear, the works of a soul in grace, because they proceed from this fount of life in which the soul is planted like a tree, are most pleasing in the eyes of God and man. There will be no freshness, no fruit, if it were not for this fount sustaining the tree, preventing it from drying out, and causing it to produce good fruit. Thus is the case of her soul that through its own fault withdraws from this fount and plants itself in a place where the water is black and foul-smelling, everything that flows from it is equally wretched and filthy." (From "The Interior Castle" by St. Teresa of Avila)

The above quote from St. Teresa of Avila may be a little long but it reminds us of the necessity for knowing our heart and knowing the need for forgiveness. Good Friday is upon us and this has always been for me one of those great moments of silence in my life of faith. It is a day, both as a lay person and now as a priest, where the quiet voice of God is present in a very unique and special way. The Cross of Jesus Christ has been planted to become the tree of life. The shouts and screams of the devil are quieted by the gentle whisper of God's mercy. The blows and buffeting of the devil are soothed by the soft caress and breath of God's love. The heat and the fire of hell are pushed back through the cool water of God's grace in Baptism. But, as St. Teresa reminds us above, we must recognize and know our need for these blessings of mercy, love and grace in our lives to fully place our trust in God's embrace from the Cross.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation has been hard these past few weeks. The normal routine, the normal times, the normal everything as disappeared and yet, God's desire for unity through forgiveness and mercy still flows from the side of Jesus on the Cross. A few days ago I spent almost an hour walking in our parking lot with a young person who hadn't been to confession since their First Holy Communion. As their sins fell from their lips you could hear the despair and fear in their voice. We talked, cried, laughed and shared hope and encouragement as we lifted the tree that was planted in the black water of sin and planted it once more in the crystal-clear fount of love. As I reminded them as I prayed absolution, the devil will tempt you, will seek to lure you into the same sins again, will try to trick you into falling...and if and when you

do, run back to this fount of life in which is planted the Cross...from which mercy and forgiveness flow in this we are all united in Christ Jesus.

“Thanks to the Cross, we no longer wander in the desert, for we have found the right way; we are no longer outside the palace, for we have found the entrance; we no longer fear the flaming arrows of the devil, for we have seen where the fount of water is. Thanks to the Cross there is no longer widowhood, for we have a groom; we no longer fear wolves, for we have a Good Shepherd. Thanks to the Cross we no longer fear the tyrant, for we are by the side of the King.”
(Saint John Chrysostom)

God bless you all and have a wonderful and holy Easter season.

See you in the Eucharist.

Fr. Mark