

Good Friday 2020: Consent to the Cross

Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Hebrews 10:16-25; John 19:1-37

The Reverend Paul D. Allick, The Church of the Advent, April 10, 2020

Jesus tells us, “If you want to become my disciple, you must deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow me.”

I’ve never had to go looking for my crosses; they come to me. When one comes into my life, I run from it but then I remember the Lord’s call to pick it up. Eventually I consent to the cross. I deny myself and ask Jesus how to carry it.

I will never forget the moment this became crystal clear to me. I was going through a rough patch. I was filled with anxiety and drowning in depression. I had very difficult decisions to make. I was on my bed pleading with Jesus, “Can’t you just take this away from me?”

Then I looked up to the crucifix hanging on my bedroom wall. I saw Jesus hanging on the cross. He asked me, “Can you suffer with me just a little bit longer?”

As with all of my crosses that one made me stronger in the end. As I followed through with the painful decisions that had to be made, I helped others move on to where they needed to go.

As a parish priest I have seen that no one needs to go looking for their crosses. They come to us. I am awed by the stories of struggle and perseverance of the people I have served. So many children of God consenting to their crosses and living again.

“Can you suffer with me just a little bit longer?”

Following Jesus is not about escaping suffering. The world is broken. We suffer from sin. Some of our crosses are self-made. Jesus knows we are going to encounter them and he shows us how to carry them. He shows us where to find redemption.

None of us want to suffer; we shouldn't. It is not healthy to go around looking for crosses to bear. Yet, we know that the suffering comes anyway. How do we face the suffering and move beyond it? We follow Jesus.

We follow him through his anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane. We stand with him as he is unjustly convicted. We wear the crown of thorns with him and face the humiliation. We carry the cross with him with our hurting bodies and injured spirits. We are crucified with him. We find peace through his cross. We find out who we really are and what we really need.

Our new life in Christ makes no sense without the cross. The Church herself makes no sense without the cross. We are tempted to domesticate Christ and his Church; to make the Gospel more acceptable to ourselves and to others. We are tempted to seek everything about Jesus and His Church except the cross.

We are definitely a time of carrying our crosses. We carry them as a community through this pandemic.

As walk through this, it is essential to remember that the Church throughout the ages has suffered. Indeed, the Church today in many parts of the world has been carrying heavy crosses while we in the West have lived in institutional luxury.

Christians in places like North Korea and Egypt live daily with the threat of persecution. Coming together for them is a privilege not an option among other pleasant activities lived out in a free society.

As we go through this trial let us walk in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who suffer to follow Christ day after day. Let us offer up our discomfort and distress for them. Let us not run from this cross. In the Name of Jesus Christ, let us triumph over this cross.