

Good Friday of the Lord's Passion

2005

Is 52:13--53:12

Ps 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25

Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9

Jn 18:1--19:42

“Who was hanging on what for whom?”

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When St. Augustine spoke with his gathered assembly on a Good Friday long ago, he noted that St. Paul took great pride in the cross of Christ. “He could see who had hung upon what for whom,” Augustine said, “and it was on that humility of God, that abasement of the divine majesty, that the apostle had the presumption to rely.”

St. Paul knew that it was Jesus Christ who died, not only for him, but for all of us. He knew that the sacrifice of Christ made our lives, and our eternal life, possible. It wasn't the miracles, it wasn't the creation of the world with the Father, it wasn't any of the great things he had done. It was his humble acceptance of the cross in which Paul takes his ultimate pride.

As I was writing this, I was sitting in front of a painting in the McQuade Art Gallery by Curlee Raven Holton entitled “Birth of Techno God.” The painting itself is a very dark look, literally and figuratively, at the role technology has assumed in our society. We now have images of and information on everything at our fingertips, which is both a blessing, according to the artist, and a curse. The images on the painting evoke the reality that we can view the good, the bad and the unspeakable in a matter of seconds. Faces and hands appear on the artist's canvas like negative/Xeroxed images; they are the faces and hands of the innocent, of the addicted, of the predators, of the voyeurs, of the drowning. There are color images of that which should be studied and engaged on a human level, but have instead been reduced to a sound bite. In the center of it all is an emaciated Christ figure being “crucified” by data port cables looking out at us, waiting to be engaged. . . to be remembered. Neither he, nor I, wish to say that technology is a bad thing. Far from it. But like all created things, we can abuse it and turn it into our god.

SO, who is hanging on what for whom?

Who, or what, is at the center of your life? If the answer is not God, I would challenge you, during this holiest time of our year, to take a serious look. I'm not judging. I'm sure

that I've placed God on the sidelines more than once. If we are honest, we all have. If you are honest, you know you have.

As I observe campus life, as I talk with students about their lives, it is impossible not to notice how often cell phones are ringing, how often i-pods and personal CD players are playing, how often students are instant messaging each other, televisions on during all meals. . . .all this communication without face to face contact. All these sound bite conversations about nothing. On a recent spring break trip, several students were reduced to tears over having to miss a television show. "But the O.C. is our LIFE," they protested. And they were serious.

Their life? Are you kidding me? They were willing, no. . . .demanding to stop their lives, to give up a chance to actually have face to face contact with other human beings for a television show.

Who is hanging upon what for whom? Who is dying on what and for whom? For what and for whom do we stop our lives. How often do we give up the chance to know, I mean really know, another human being? How often do we give up the chance to discern the presence of Christ in any given situation because it is easier to be entertained at the touch of button rather than engage in the world immediately around us? (Christ is there in the center of it all, waiting for us to engage him.) Do we place ourselves on crosses of our own making? Are we, as individuals and as a culture, sacrificing ourselves on crosses of diversions turned into addictions? Are we dying in a culture that connects us to information but ultimately destroys our ability to communicate and live with others face to face? Are we being dehumanized to the point where we are so many pixels on a screen and incapable of conversation without a keyboard? Are we dying from a lack of REAL engagement in our world?

Augustine also said that "we should consider, as far as we can, over what precipice of pride we human beings may tumble if we don't go along with a humble God."

Do we have the humility to listen to the stories of others? Do we have the humility and ability to participate in God's story? We just heard the Passion narrative. Were you engaged? Were you bored? Are you willing to engage God, not only in this building but every day? No one else can answer these questions for you.

Do we have the humility to put aside our own immediate desires (The O.C. is my LIFE/ I have to watch the GAME) and engage with another human being? Are we humble enough to realize that by engaging with other human beings, that really LISTENING to their stories can lead to understanding, to the ability to listen, really listen, and then respond, to solid relationships built on shared life experiences and respect and the building of a community? Do we realize that this simple humility of putting aside our immediate desires to engage with the other can lead to a better understanding of who GOD is and how GOD works in this world? Developing the humility to follow a humble God can, if we allow it, lead to a challenging life built on love, respect, the ability and desire to listen and respond, a life actually lived in REAL time and not vicariously through the abuse of technological

advancements. Will you and I live together the life that Christ won for us, through his death and resurrection?

And so, this day, I can offer only questions.

Do you know who is hanging on what for whom?

Who, in your free will, will you follow?