

**Good Friday:  
Celebration of the Lord's Passion**

Cycle C, 4.19.19

Isaiah 52:13-53:12/Hebrews 4:14-16;5:7-9/

John 18:1-19:42

**HE CALLS US EACH BY NAME**

There are times in our lives when things seem dark and dismal, fragile and hopeless. There are days when our world looks bleak and horrifying. There are images – like the sight of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris engulfed in flames – that break our hearts. There are passages when the gospel does not sound like “Good News” – like today, Good Friday. The Passion according to John is dark: betrayal, denial, interrogation, intrigue, blame, torture and the execution of Jesus... good news is not obvious. But, we can see the dimmest of stars on the darkest of nights. Parisians watched in heartache Monday as 850-plus years of art, faith and culture blazed at Notre Dame Cathedral. The spire fell. The roofing was ravaged. But then, after officials announced late Monday that the cathedral would survive -- signs of hope surfaced among the damage.



The cathedral's golden altar cross was seen standing as officials surveyed the charred structure. Votive candles lit prior to the blaze — each one symbolizing a prayer and the faith of a believer — still flickered undisturbed in the cathedral. “*Notre Dame*

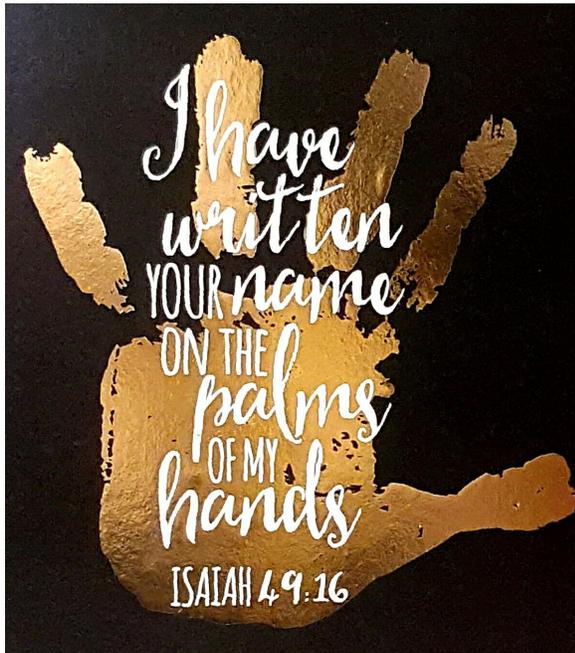
*was damaged but the soul of France was not,”* Michel Aupetit, archbishop of Paris, said. Not all was lost, surveyors found. And many of the cathedral's greatest treasures were safe. Hopeful signs of centuries of faith and devotion that survived in the catastrophe. So we search for that ray of light, the grace of God, the word of hope -- wherever and whenever it may appear. If you listened closely you may have heard the word of Good News amidst the Passion story today. It appears only in John's account, *The slave's name was Malchus.\**



When we first hear about the band who came to seize Jesus, we're told of soldiers and guards. One can imagine a modern-day scene of a group of desperate immigrants from Guatemala or El Salvador – several families living in a two-room apartment, huddled in fear and anticipation of ICE agents coming to arrest them. Peter, passionate and impulsive, reminds us that anger often follows the path of least resistance. He draws a sword and attacks, but not a soldier, not someone of power. Peter attacks Malchus, a slave. Likely, Malchus wasn't there of his own accord and had no personal interest in the situation. He had done nothing. He was innocent. And still, Malchus becomes the target of Peter's anger. With all the events that needed to be written down for Good Friday, this Gospel

writer could have easily omitted Malchus' name. True, his name doesn't add to the plot... but, it does add to the *story*. The author of this Gospel may have recorded the name of this vulnerable, powerless slave to remind us that Jesus cared about those who were vulnerable and powerless. Malchus will never be "forgotten like the unremembered dead." Malchus is forever a part of the story. He was marginalized and brutalized, but then lifted up and remembered. Including his name reminds us that there are possibilities for hope where there is despair, for solidarity amid fracture, and for tenderness, compassion and recognition in times of great violence. *"The slave's name was Malchus."*

There is a beautiful passage in the prophet Isaiah(49:10) worth committing to memory that says: *Can a mother forget the infant at her breast, walk away from the baby she bore? But even if a mother should forget, I'd never forget you—never. Look, I've written your name on the palm of my hand.*



In the face of the picture of a big world with all its turmoil and tragedy, given the population of billions who inhabit this world, you and I, as individuals, seem to shrink in comparison. Our problems, our aches and pains, our frustrations or failures can seem like a drop of water in the ocean. The author of the Psalms wonders the same thing when, in Psalm 8, he questions God: *When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have set in place; then I ask "What are human beings that you are mindful of us, mere mortals that you care for us?"*

And yet God does. To God we are each unique and precious. We matter to God and the death of Jesus on the cross affirms God's love for each of us. The theologian John Dwyer affirms how much God sees and loves in us because Jesus is one of us and one with us, most especially on the cross. He writes: *Through Jesus, the broken being of the world enters the personal life of the everlasting God, and this God shares in the broken being of the world. God is eternally committed to this world, and this commitment becomes full and final in his personal presence within this weak and broken man on the cross. In him the eternal One takes our destiny upon himself.*

Never think that God is dispassionate in your regard. Never hesitate to bring to the foot of the cross all your hopes and dreams, all your desires and disappointments, your tears and your joys. Jesus did not give his life on the cross to change God's mind about humanity; he offered his life to change humanity's mind about God, so that we might know and experience the depth of love that God has for each of us.



At the time of the Veneration of the Cross, each of us is invited to come forward and honor the wood of the cross – with a touch, a kiss, an embrace, a genuflection, a bow – whatever gesture for you embodies your union with the Lord. It is your moment to be with Christ on Calvary, to share his agony and death and to feel in your own heart the reconciliation and salvation he won for us.

Let that ritual moment  
inform your daily prayer  
and know that  
through a moment of intimacy with Christ  
his desire is for a life of union  
with you and me.

As we sing at Communion time:  
*We hold the death of the Lord  
deep in our hearts;*

*Living, now we remain with Jesus the Christ.*

*John Kasper, OSFS*

[\*with acknowledgement of Maureen K. Day, Ph.D. –  
“A Heart Renewed” – Daily Lenten Prayer – JST, 4.19.19]