

Homily 9-3-17

Every year we celebrate the Triumph of the Cross on September 14. And that is the theme of our meditation today. Notice in the gospel that Christ told his disciples that he would be raised on the third day. Peter seems oblivious to that promise. It goes in one ear and out the other. He is fixated on our Lord's suffering and death and forgets our Lord's promise of victory.

Father Jim Schmitmeyer is a priest in the archdiocese of Cincinnati. In one of his books he talked about the last days of his grandmother's life. She was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Here is how he wrote about the experience. "Everything had grown completely strange to her and nothing was familiar. She no longer recognized anyone, did not know where she was and spoke only a few phrases in German, the language of her youth. On the night she lay dying the family was called. Before heading out the door to the nursing home to say goodbye, her daughter thought to bring something sacred -- a small wooden crucifix hanging on the bedroom wall". Here is how Father Schmitmeyer described what happened next." In a world where my grandmother knew nothing else she recognized the crucifix. She reached for the cross and held it close to her until she died later that evening. I am convinced that, on some deep level, in that part of us that we call the soul, we recognize the power of Christ's cross because we retain a memory of human love. Love remains".

We are people of the cross. We recognize it as the greatest sign of the greatest sacrifice, the greatest love the world has ever known, or will know. We are people of the cross. It seems strange to the world that we celebrate a cross, an instrument of death. But this is the great mystery of the cross. Christ changed that instrument of torture into a source of life. That is what Christians celebrate. We are part of it and it is a part of us. We are people of the cross. It all began at the start of our lives before we could even speak or think for ourselves. When we were brought to the church to be baptized as babies, the priest or deacon marked our foreheads with the sign of the cross. Our parents and godparents did the same. We were claimed for Christ. We already began to share in his death and resurrection. When we got older we began to dip our fingers into the font and cross ourselves, reliving our baptism every time we come into church. Throughout our lives we make the sign of the cross when we pray.

We see it everywhere, on necklaces, rings and rosaries, steeples and cemeteries. Right now we are in the midst of it. At every Eucharist we celebrate the dying and rising of Christ and our share in that mystery. We come to buildings made of stone and glass and steel to pray, to ask, to hope and rejoice. Day after day believers come to this church to be fed by the Eucharist and touched by grace. Every year on Good Friday this church is filled, a day when the cross looms the largest and casts the darkest shadow. We stand before a wooden cross and kiss it. We hear the words echoing, " Behold the

wood of the cross on which hung the salvation of the world". We are helpless before this deep truth. We are people of the cross. It is not just a source of death; it is a source of strength and a cause for hope.

We are people of the cross. Where would we be without it? In moments of conflict, anxiety, fear or loss, we look to the cross. We look to in times of joy and gratitude. 2000 years ago the wood of the cross became a tree of life. As followers of Jesus, as people with a personal relationship with our Lord, we have to be willing to sacrifice everything we have to fill the world with the Father's love. Our daily turmoil, our problems, our pains all take on an infinite value when we trust them to Jesus, when we unite them with his cross. God did not tell us that we have to be successful in life. But he did tell us that we have to be faithful. And being faithful means to carry the cross that our Lord asks us to carry. And so we try to carry it without bitterness, anger or complaint. How much does God love the world? So much that he gave his only son, that because he was lifted high on a cross all might be saved through him.

God love you!