

Homily
Memorial of Saint Paul of the Cross, priest
October 20, 2023

There is a lot of suffering in the world today. We can't go far before hearing of the many atrocities being inflicted on the innocent, vulnerable and poor. We live in a world of war, desecration, disrespect for human life. And yet, that has been the state of the world since the Fall. Death entered the world, and with it, suffering.

Yet, God has a plan. Even before the Fall, God knows our history to the end of time. And God has a plan. God has been active in our human history since He created human history. And then He entered the world and took on our sinfulness and suffered greatly, more than any human ever. And He did it willingly, lovingly, joyfully.

Today we remember St. Paul of the Cross, an 18th century priest and founder of the Passionists, an order that combines devotion to Christ's passion, preaching to the poor and rigorous penances. Through Christ's passion, St. Paul saw God's love for all people, empowering him to preach compassion for the poor.

Some question God's wisdom in allowing Himself to be crucified. They are fools. Who can express wisdom greater than God's wisdom? Who knows more than God? The foolishness of God is greater than any human wisdom. Our first reading communicates this well. We, who embrace the cross understand that suffering is part of this world and that, through God's plan, we have the promise of life eternal, joy in heaven.

Jesus tells us, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." Sounds simple, but it is not easy. We all know how hard it is to let go of worldly comforts in favor of storing treasures in heaven. Easy to say, so difficult to put into action. But that is what Jesus is calling us to do.

How can we today loose our life for Christ's sake? How can we let go of worldly enticements? It's a question we all need to consider. The answer is different for each of us. I am attached to so many comforts and distractions. I like my shows and videos. I like my meals, especially those prepared by my wife. Are these getting in the way of me embracing my cross? When are those things I'm attached to becoming vices instead of virtues?

What are you attached to? What things or activities get in the way of truly embracing Christ's cross? It's a daily struggle. It's a struggle we all will suffer until we rest in Him who gives us the strength, courage, faith and wisdom to continue that daily struggle.

Today, let's look outside ourselves and consider how we can pick up our cross, be Christ for one another, and take another step toward that promise of an eternal reward.