

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

LIVING THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS...

Every year, just around Holy Week, our teen group puts on a beautiful performance of what are called "Living Stations of the Cross." As the name implies, this is more than just going around the church and looking at the fourteen pictures. Rather, the teenagers, actually act out all the stations, (including the Resurrection). They are in costume and the church here at Saint Charles really is a great setting for this very special re-enactment.

To me, it is always so very moving when you view the Station of the Cross in such a lifelike way. The kids put their heart and soul into this prayer service and as I said, the sufferings of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Mother are so vivid that it strikes home.

I think that is really what the Stations of the Cross are supposed to do. We try to reflect upon what it cost our Lord to suffer and die for us on Good Friday. We can never truly appreciate another's suffering until we walk in their shoes. In the living stations we get a clearer picture of the passion and might even incorporate its lessons in our hearts and minds.

There is so much suffering in our world today and at times, people just do not know how to cope with it all. Suffering can turn us away from God but conversely, it could also draw us closer to him.

For example, a couple of months ago a very good woman came to see me about a personal problem in her family. It was a very serious problem and we spent about an hour talking about it. This sincere lady spoke about what it cost her and the pain it brought into her life. Then sadly, she turned to me and said, "Father, the worst thing about it all is that I really feel like I'm losing my faith in God-I am questioning His presence!" In this regard, I think most of us have all "been there" as they say.

When there are acute problems and trials in this life, perhaps some of us wonder, "Where is God in all of this?" That is a very normal question to ask. When we focus on the passion of Christ as we are supposed to do in this Lenten Season, we can truly gain strength to face whatever life throws at us. As Christians we can truly say that "God does know what I suffer." The answer is in the cross of Christ! The secret of suffering is to offer up our pains in union with the Lord.

Many years ago, there was a poet by the name of Joyce Kilmer who understood this idea perfectly. Kilmer was famous for a poem: "I think that I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree." However, another poem he wrote was entitled "The Prayer of a Soldier in France." He had served in the first world war and experienced all the horror and terror of warfare and he tried to relate it to the sufferings of Jesus.

Kilmer wrote:

My shoulders ache beneath my pack
(Lie easier cross upon his back)
I march with feet that burn and smart
(Tread holy feet upon my heart)
Men shout at me who may not speak
(They scourged thy back and smote thy cheek)
I may not lift a hand to clear my eyes of salty drops that sear
(Then shall my fickle soul forget thy agony of bitter sweat?)
My rifle hand is stiff and numb
(From thy pierced hand red rivers come)
Lord, thou did suffer more for me than all the hosts of land and sea.
So let me render back again this millionth of thy gift. Amen

Sincerely in Christ,
Fr. Jerome