

## Good Friday Sermon Year B - 04-02-2021

On Good Friday I am often reminded of a movie, Amadeus. The story is about the musical prodigy, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. At one point in the story Mozart debuts a new composition for the Hapsburg Emperor, Joseph II in the city of Vienna. The Emperor asks the opinion of the jealous court composer, Salieri by name. Salieri responds that the work has “too many notes”. Mozart’s response is that there are just as many notes as need be.

The problem is not too many notes, but the ability of the audience to absorb all the notes and see the composition as a whole. That is what Good Friday is like, too many notes, too many things happening all of them compressed into a few short hours. Like Mozart, I would say there are not too many notes, but too little time spent in contemplation, in reflection in pondering these events and what they may mean for each one of us. For, they do mean something for each of us and for our spiritual life. Like a tapestry or a complex painting, each year we can find something different in the events of Good Friday, something that causes us to delve deeper into the story to find what God has waiting for us there. It takes maturity, not of chronological time but of spiritual time to discover what is important for our lives.

I am always reminded on Good Friday of one particular time when I learned an important lesson. It was a lesson taught by a child of 5 or 6. I was in seminary in Chicago at the time. The seminary community was made up of a wide variety of people in all stages of their spiritual life. We had families with children as well as individual students in the community. On this particular Good Friday, the children were out of school. Someone had organized the Stations of the Cross that was designed especially for them. Being curious, I went. It was outdoors, a lovely warm spring day in Chicago. The children were gathered with parents and other interested adults. There were few words, only the announcement of each station and a carefully planned physical activity that was an expression of the station. When we reached the place where Jesus was nailed to the cross, the leader brought out a rough cross made of lumber, several hammers and some nails. She gave some of the nails to each child and in turn, they pounded the nails into the cross. I especially remember one little girl. She took those nails and that hammer and pounded for all she was worth. I will never forget the sound of the nails being driven into the wood. I will never forget the words of Jesus that rang in my head with each whack of the hammer. “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

I have been that child, doing things with great energy and without realizing what I was doing, how I was harming the world and the human beings that God loved. That little girl did not know what she was doing and was in no need of forgiveness for pounding those nails. But the experience made me think of the times that I have thoughtlessly or with intention pounded nails into the Cross of Christ. Times when I was sorely in need of confession and forgiveness.

“Father forgive them...” for what do we need forgiveness? This is the day to ponder and reflect, to call up into our memory the times when we have acted in a way contrary to the teachings of Jesus.

“Love one another as I have loved you.” This is the day to reflect on love, and not only on loving one another, hard as that may be, but to consider how we love. Do we go the extra distance and not only love but love as Jesus loved? What does it mean to love as Jesus loves? This is the time to think about those in our world who seem to be unlovable. What makes them so? Is it a failing on their part or on ours? How do we see them as God sees them?

The hour has come for us to move deeper, from knowing what Jesus has done for us to understanding what it means to us. Reflect, ponder, consider and prepare for the blessings to come. It's Good Friday, hard as it is, but Easter is coming.