

- After listening to the story of our Lord's Passion, we may be tempted to ask the simple question: why? Why did the Son of God suffer so? Why this terrible violence? Why did Jesus, Who was innocent and perfect in every way, suffer the cruel ignominy of the cross?
- At the very least His execution like a common criminal some 2000 years ago was the most unjust and heinous crime the world has ever known.
- For those of us who know that Jesus is Lord and who love Him as our savior, it is unthinkable that He suffered at our hands, and yet we know it to be true. His suffering is a truth that we cannot deny.
- The crucifixes that adorn our homes and churches, and that we wear around our necks testify to this terrible reality. Even the Sign of the Cross, that we Catholics so often make with nary a thought, bears silent and perpetual witness to man's inhumanity to the one Man who was also God. We are haunted by the fact that man the creature murdered God the Creator.
- Regardless of when we were born into history, there is blood on our hands, for we have all sinned against the living God.
- And this sad fact begs yet another question. If Jesus truly is God, then why did He allow this? For surely God cannot be coerced or forced by even the strongest and most powerful of men to do anything. If God is truly God, then He must have chosen this.
- So why did God choose the cross? St. Thomas Aquinas gives us two answers: First, Jesus endured the shame of the cross as a remedy for sins. Secondly, He did so as an example of how we should act.
- St. Thomas tells us that the cross is remedy because "in the face of all the evils which we incur on account of our sins, we have found relief through the Passion of Christ." Yet the cross is also an example, "for the Passion of Christ completely suffices to fashion our lives."
- St. Thomas teaches us that "whoever wishes to live perfectly should do nothing but disdain what Christ disdained on the cross and desire what He desired, for the cross exemplifies every virtue."
- But even more than being a remedy for our sins and a pattern for our lives, the cross is our bridge to Heaven.
- Although God created us in His own image and likeness and destined us to live with Him forever in Heaven, we forfeited our rights to our eternal inheritance through our sinfulness.
- Our sins cut us off from God; they alienate us from God and bind us to this world. Yet, through the power of the cross, we have a means for passing through that veil that separates God and man, Heaven and earth.
- And in this we see the true divinity of our Lord, for only God could take a shameful instrument of execution and make it an instrument of glory and the very key to Heaven's gate.
- With a love that we cannot fathom, Jesus pours out His mercy upon all who seek His forgiveness. The same blood that covers our hands in guilt now covers our souls with mercy!
- And that, my friends, is why Jesus endured the cross, for without the cross we would all be utterly lost. And that is why we call today *Good Friday*; and it is very good indeed.
- And so, my brothers and sisters, let us all confidently approach the throne of grace to receive His mercy. Come and behold Him, our savior and our king, and let us give thanks today for the gift of His holy cross, by which He has redeemed the world.