**Good Friday, April 18, 2014; Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Heb 10:16-25; John 18-19:42; Rev Mary Trainor**

Today, Good Friday, reminds us of one thing: the cross. It is on this day we journey with Jesus through the passion - through the 14 stations, to the cross, to the crucifixion of Jesus. It is a day all about Jesus, and yet it is a day about us -- because Jesus did this all for us, He died for us that we might live. We heard, in our Hebrews reading, "***Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.***" What did He promise to us? God has promised us that:

- His grace is sufficient for us. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

- those who believe in Jesus will be saved. (Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38).

- He is victorious over death (Acts 2:32, 1 Corinthians 15:3,4;57).

- eternal life awaits us (John 10:27,28).

Many people find the brutality of God the Father allowed His son to die on the cross impossible to stomach; why did Jesus have to die? Couldn't this have been accomplished some other way? The answer is no. Let's say that Jesus ran away at the Garden of Gesthemane, and that the Roman soldiers never caught him. Let's say there was no crucifixion and that Jesus went on and lived a long life. Where would we be today? If Jesus had not died we would be back stuck in our hopeless state like the Israelites were; we needed saving, and we were saved. Back before Jesus, people were stuck -- there was such a huge gap between who the people were and who God was -- and that gap was getting bigger and bigger. Jesus came, divine and human, to deal with that gap. The death of Christ closed that gap, for Jesus is the bridge between us and God the Father; He accomplished reconciliation. As Isaiah said in today's first reading, "***surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases.....upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed."*** We are offered new life in Jesus, the ability to live fully into who God made us to be -- relying on God's strength and wisdom every minute of every day.

It is springtime, so think about it this way: you are a seed in some rocky dry dirt. You have the potential of new life, but you are buried in this dark place....oh you are alive and surrounded by life in the soil, and you don't know that anything can be any different than the way it is there in the earth. But, there is the possibility of much more in you than just the little seed sitting in the darkness of the dry dirt: you can grow, you can emerge into the sunlight, you can flower and bear fruit, fruit that will last. But this emergence into this abundant life is only possible if something happens -- and that something is that Jesus reaches down into the soil, moves you and plants you in good soil, waters you, gives you light, and in these new conditions you discover the abundant life that was awaiting you. Jesus brought life to our struggling bodies and to our suffering world. Here are the words of 16th century saint St Gregory of Nazianzus: "**Humanity had to be brought back to life by the humanity of God. We had to be summoned to life by his Son."**

The cross is a symbol of pain and suffering, but the cross is more a symbol of hope and love and life. It is through the cross that we are plucked out from the darkness to the light, from sin into salvation. Good Friday says to us that if Jesus had not died on the cross and rose again for us, life for us is despair; the cross must be seen in light of the resurrection. The empty cross of the resurrected Christ is about hope, is about success over sin, and eternal life through our Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus act of love on the cross gave you and me life. Today, as you ponder the meaning of the cross for your life, be filled with the love it represents -- love for you. Amen.