

Good Friday 2024

“We Three Kings of Orient Are, Bearing Gifts We Traverse Afar.” We heard those words not quite three months ago at Epiphany, as the Savior is manifested to the world and the Magi brought their gifts to the Infant Jesus ... Gold, for a King; Frankincense, for a Priest; and Myrrh for one was to die. They seemed strange gifts for a child. But some thirty years later, as Jesus came to this supreme moment of His earthly life and entered the Passion, those gifts revealed their true purpose: for Christ is the King, crowned now not with gold and jewels, but with thorns. He is the Great High Priest, whose sacrifice was not something from creation, but His very life. And He is the saving Victim, offering Himself in death so that death itself may be overthrown.

It may seem out of place to recall Christmas on Good Friday; but Jesus Himself calls us back to His birth: ***“For this I was born,”*** He says, ***“for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.”*** And that truth is the final revelation of the depth of the infinite love and mercy of God. As there was no room for Him in the Inn when He was born, so He is laid in a borrowed tomb when He died ... underscoring His words that He is a King, but His Kingdom is not of this world.

We come today to adore the Holy Cross, on which this King redeems and reclaims us for Life by His own death. We also come with our own share of the Cross, whatever it might be. We each stand silent, humbled, in awe that God so loves the world ... so loves ME ... that Jesus gave His life. “I AM,” He declares when He is arrested; contrasting with Peter’s repeated “I am not” in denying he knows the Lord. ***I AM, Jesus still says; and we come with the simple truth that we are not ... that is, that like Peter in that moment we are not always loyal to Christ and worthy of mercy, that we have nothing to offer the Lord other than our humbled pride, our weakness, our sorrows and regret.*** But that is precisely the gift He desires at the end of His life ... our love and our hearts open to His mercy. As we place ourselves before the Cross this most sacred day, like the Magi, we bow down and do homage to Christ. ***I am not, we are able to say with complete trust, because Jesus says, It is finished, your redemption; and I AM.***