

Good Friday
April 3, 2015
Cistercian Abbey
Abbot Peter Verhalen

When we read the Passion of our Lord, we can't help but pray. We can choose to venerate the instrument of Christ's suffering. And we can go to him in the Upper Room for his Last Supper.

No one but the hardest of heart can witness the Passion of Christ without being moved. Simply on a human level, we must pity him and pray, if only silently and to an unknown God, for the one who suffers so violently and unjustly. We see Jesus betrayed, beaten, and most cruelly crucified, and as human beings we pray that he be saved— that we be saved – from such suffering. Even if it is not yet born of faith, such prayer is good, for it opens our hearts to our common humanity and the sufferings of others.

In faith, however, we can choose to venerate the Cross, the instrument of injustice and suffering. When we come forward to touch or kiss the cross, we acknowledge the great good news of our faith: that the work of sinful, human hands has become the instrument of our salvation. We kiss the cross of Christ, for by it he has redeemed the world and turned all our suffering into the glorious means of salvation.

In faith we can then go to the One who changed the Cross into the Tree of life, who is ready to change our sufferings into acts of love. When we go to Jesus in the Upper Room, we must choose whether like Christ we will embrace the Father's will to transform the Cross into an instrument of salvation or like Judas we will reject the plan of our loving Father. When we receive the Eucharist today,

we should ask Jesus to live within us, to transform us, so that in Him we can embrace the Cross in our lives and make it fruitful, the Instrument of Life.