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## Malpractice and Misconception of Good Friday Celebration in the Philippines

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### ABSTRACT

This research is designed to explain theologically Good Friday which is one of the important events in the life of the Church. It seeks to analyze the mystery behind Good Friday, particularly on Christ's suffering and death. This is done to help the reader understand Good Friday. The researcher has included some important biblical accounts, Church documents, and ideas of prominent theologians that explain the Theology of Good Friday. The research argues that the claim of the misconceptions and malpractices of the people on Good Friday is not supported by the accounts of Sacred Scripture and the Church's documents, and this should be corrected in a prudent manner as possible.

**Keywords:** Good Friday, Suffering, Theology of suffering, Redemptive suffering, and Crucifixion.

### INTRODUCTION:

"The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but for those who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). By the Passion of Christ, the four elements are purified, and by the four arms of the Cross, the four quarters of the world are saved. It is for this reason that He is suspended between Heaven and Earth, because by His Passion Heaven and Earth are united, and the entire world is dedicated a temple to God in His blood (Monti, 2012, p. 404). The death of Jesus Christ is significant event that ever happened in history. It is not simply a commemoration of an important event that happened in the past but should be a prayerful experience that makes Christ's sacrifice "present and operative" as stated by Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa (Cantalamessa, 2012). It was universally regarded as a

day of mourning or "*dies amaritudinis*" as what St. Ambrose calls it, "on which we fast" (Kellner, 1908, p.73).

Good Friday is the day in which Catholics commemorate the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Catholics are enjoined by almost all other Christians in the solemn commemoration of this day. It is also a legal holiday around much of the world (<https://www.catholic.org/lent/friday.php>). A researcher said that "if Holy Thursday can be called "the hour of Jesus", Good Friday will be "the hour of the prince of darkness" two hours but made one; complementary aspect of the same, the most important, moment of the history of humanity, when God drew from sin its own remedy. The "hour of the prince of darkness" is the same as the "hour of Jesus" because our reconciliation with the Father, our

victory over the enemy who held us chained to his revolt, demanded the immolation of the Just One” (Benoit, 1950, p. 75). Christ total self-abandonment to the will of the Father is His obedience to fulfill the Scriptures that says, “in two days’ time, it will be Passover, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified” (Matthew 26:2). As the Magisterium solemnly teaches that Jesus Christ offered himself on the cross as a true and proper sacrifice for the salvation of mankind (Ocariz *et al.*, 1994, p. 221). “And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him” (Letter to the Hebrews 9:27-28). In this regard, the observance of this day of Christ’s suffering, crucifixion and death evidently has been in existence from the earliest days of the Church (<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/resource/56093/the-significance-of-good-friday>). Over centuries, the Church continuously provides instructional materials to help the people to participate actively in the celebration and to deepen their encounter with Christ. People are guided in their spiritual life, especially in their observances of the Church’s activities.

In Good Friday, the Liturgy of the Church obliges us to reflect on its spiritual activities such as reading the Seven Last Words of Christ which we hear the words of Christ before He gave up His last breath on the cross. After this, follows the proper liturgy of Good Friday which starts from great silence and prostration.

The whole afternoon’s Liturgy is divided in three parts: the first part is the Liturgy of the Word wherein the first reading is taken from the Old Testament from the book of the Prophet Isaiah 52:13-53:12, which speaks on the Suffering Servant and Psalm 31:2,6 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25 which expresses dependency of entrusting one’s life to God. The second reading is taken from the Letter to the Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9. It speaks of Jesus as High Priest who became the sacrificial offering to the Father. The Gospel is taken from St. John 18:1-19:42. It narrates us Jesus’ Passion which is the center of the liturgical service on Good Friday. The first part is concluded in Intercessions wherein ten petitions are being said by the minister, and all people are praying before God as He leads the petitions. The second part

is Adoration of the Cross. The minister and the faithful are paying respect to the wooden cross- *lignum crucis* where Christ offered Himself for the salvation of all. One gesture that is usually expressed is kissing on the cross-*lignum crucis*. The last part is Holy Communion which the faithful partakes the body of Christ. It is understood that a mass is not celebrated on this occasion. This brings us to reflect the importance of the suffering and the cross of Christ which is the center of the celebration. However, problems arise concerning the understanding of Good Friday. First, people have false beliefs and superstitions that are not in accordance with the Church’s teachings. Second, there is a superficial understanding of the celebration of the Lord’s passion because people just attend for some shallow reasons and emphasize these beliefs and superstitions as the most important part of the Paschal Triduum. They have an inadequate idea that Good Friday has a rich meaning in our Christian faith. Third is about the emphasis on how it is being explained in some documents of the Church. The explanation of Good Friday is quite passing; thus, it needs a study to explain its meaning and to make it more accessible and understandable to people. It is an undeniable fact that people in the present time are becoming more interested in doctrinal teachings of the Catholic Church specifically the teaching of Good Friday. Therefore, the Church must provide an adequate response to this need of the People of God. The present study is a response to this need to help people, especially the ordinary faithful, understand in a clear and systematic manner the celebration of Good Friday. As a result, the faithful will grow in their faith and in their relationship with God.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The research focused particularly on the Theology of Good Friday and its significance to the people in the present time. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following problems:

- 1) What is the significance of the Good Friday celebration?
- 2) What are the theological explanations & historical evidence of the Good Friday event?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives of this paper are:

- 1) To present explicit historical evidence of Good Friday and its development.
- 2) To expose the theological meaning and biblical basis of the suffering in Good Friday.
- 3) To identify the misconceptions in understanding and malpractices in the theology of Good Friday.

### Why is it called Good Friday?

Good Friday is the day on which Christians commemorate the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. It is a real historical event that Jesus Christ redeemed the world by obeying the will of the heavenly Father. The term Good Friday may seem counterintuitive to many Christians, since the day is typically viewed as a solemn one often observed with fasting and abstinence and other practices. It may contradict to Christian faith as to why it is called “Good Friday” where in fact Christ-the Lord died on that day. Is it good because Christ whom they believed died on Friday and will save them? Why Good Friday is called Good Friday?

The term *good* used to mean *holy in early times*. Accordingly, there are theories about why Good Friday is called *Good Friday*, but only one seems to be supported by linguists and by historical evidence.

First, it is called *Good Friday* because, Christians believe that it led to the Resurrection of Jesus and his victory over death and sin and the celebration of Easter which is the very pinnacle of Christian celebrations. Perhaps, this logic has helped the name stick. It is certainly how many Christians today understand the term, but it is not where the name originally comes from. Second, the one supported by both the *Oxford English Dictionary* and every language expert, which is the term comes from an antiquated meaning of *good*. The answer is clearly to be that it's from *good* meaning ‘holy’ according to Jesse Sheidlower, the president of the American Dialect Society. Liberman agreed, noting that if you consider the other names for Good Friday such as “Sacred Friday” in the Romance languages (*Viernes Santo*, e.g.), “Passion Friday” in Russian-the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s explanation makes excellent sense (<https://slate.com/culture/2017/04/why-is-good-friday-called-good-friday-the-etymology-and-origins-of-the-holidays-name.html>).

The book of *Baltimore Catechism* no. 4 on questions 79 and 80 “On what day did Christ die? and why do you call that day “good” on which Christ suffered so sorrowful a death?” asserts that Christ died on Good Friday. This is evidence that the term “Good Friday” has already been used since that time. And we call that day good on which Christ died because by His death, He showed His great love for man and purchased for him every blessing (Kinkead, 1891, p. 91). Evidently, the term Good Friday has its own historical development in terms of its place, mentality, tradition, culture, and belief as it goes along through the periods of time.

By the mere fact also that Christians believe in the salvific mystery of the cross, undeniably, Good Friday is really a day that Christ sanctified by giving up His life on the cross. Through His passion, crucifixion, and death the world became holy and redeemed humanity. Theologically, the first theory is more eminent and has an agreeable answer as to why it is called Good Friday. Christ was crucified so that people may believe that on the third day He will rise again as foretold in the Scriptures and to make known His identity as the Son of God. We should affirm that the reason why it is called Good Friday because on that day on His way on the cross, Christ sanctified it by offering His life on the cross. He died for us, and this brought us to salvation. The second is more on its historical and cultural point of view which presents supplementary idea to support the claim. Therefore, why is it called Good Friday? We affirm to say that it is on that very day that Christ sanctified the day by offering Himself and be a pleasing victim to the Father. Since, Jesus -the just one is the only capable of redeeming the humanity and there could be no another one nor over and above in Him. There will be no greater personalities than Christ, the Son of the living God.

### Crucifixion is a Real Event

Annually, Good Friday is celebrated by all Christians in the whole world as they remember Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. As part of a great celebration of Paschal Triduum, this celebration is a unique one because of its melancholic liturgy. On Good Friday, we observe many things inside the Church such as the veiled statue of saints, the altar is bare, and the faithful are praying simultaneously. Other devotions and practices are observed as well. But one may ask when

did the first Good Friday start? Robert Robinson a Baptist Scholar wrote a book entitled “*The History and Mystery of Good Friday*” stated:

At present we only observe, Good Friday is a ceremony of this kind, and the original records of pure Christianity say nothing about it. Neither any one Evangelist, nor all the four together narrate the whole history of Jesus Christ, nor yet all the circumstances of those parts on which they enlarge most. St. John, the last of these historians, closes his history with a declaration, that many things relative to Jesus Christ-were not written. The times of the birth and crucifixion of our Savior are so written in these authentic records that nothing certain can be determined concerning them. All who have pretended to settle these periods are conjecturers, and not historians, as their variety proves. There is only one opinion in the whole Christian world concerning the country of Jesus Christ, and the place of his nativity; all allow he was a Jew and born at Bethlehem (Robinson, 1824, p. 4-5).

Here, Robinson’s claim says that there is no clear origin on the history of Good Friday that even the Evangelists have no given data regarding its historicity. It is only tantamount to saying that there is no Good Friday event that ever happened in the history of humanity. This means that Christ did not die on the cross. There was no crucifixion that ever happened; thus, we are still in need of redemption. With such argument, we can say that his claim has no sufficient evidence that still must be validated, and our Catholic faith is not true. Refuting such claim, the Church gives a clear answer regarding the question on the crucifixion event. But the Scripture does not explicitly specify the precise date of Jesus’ crucifixion because that was not the priority of the Early Church before. In the Gospels St. John mentioned that Jesus was crucified on “the day of Preparation” (John 19:31), that is, the Friday before the Sabbath of Passover week (Mark 15:42). The night before, on Thursday evening, Jesus ate a Passover meal with the Twelve (Mark 14:12), his “Last Supper.” But this does not mean that it is unknowable or unimportant. We should understand that Christianity is a historical religion, and the events of Christ’s life did take place in human history alongside other known events. Thus, it is helpful to locate Jesus’ death as precisely as the available

evidence allows within the larger context of human history because it will help us to appreciate His existence and to deepen our faith with the Lord. In the book of Andreas J. Kostenberger and Justin Taylor entitled “*The Final Days of Jesus: The Most Important Person Who Ever Lived*” explained the origin of first Good Friday. They argued that the exact date of Christ’s death had happened on Friday, April 3, A. D. 33. According to their data the Pharisaic-rabbinic calendar commonly used in Jesus’ day, Passover always falls on the fifteenth day of Nisan, which begins Thursday after sundown and ends Friday at sundown. In the year A. D. 33, the most likely year of Jesus’ crucifixion, Nisan 15 fell on April 3, yielding April 3, A. D. 33, as the most likely date for the crucifixion (Kostenberger & Taylor, 2014, p. i).

It is good to understand that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is not just simply a product of a human idea nor an imagination. It did really happen in human history on Mt. Calvary. Witnesses such as St. John the Beloved, Mary His Mother, Mary Magdalene who were at the foot of the Cross and others were point of reference to claim that Christ died on the cross for the salvation of all. To highlight one, let us mention Pontius Pilate, the one who ordered to sentence Jesus on the Cross. The name Pontius Pilate was mentioned in the Creed who became a procurator of Judaea, commander of the army and chief justice. He is a filth procurator or governmental representative of imperial Rome in Palestine from the year 26 to 36 A.D. He is the only Roman official named in the Apostles’ Creed. He was a ruthless governor. One example of his being a ruthless governor was when he went out of his way to provoke the Jews and when they protested or rebelled, he did not scruple to surround them and slaughter them. Alleged rebels were very often executed without a trial at all. According to Philo, the contemporary Jewish Philosopher, Pilate was “by nature inflexible self-willed and hard.” He listed Pilate’s crimes as “bribery, tyranny, pillage, violence, calumny, insufferable cruelty” (Smallwood, 1970, p. 305). This claim has been confirmed by Josephus a Jewish historian who recorded the story, and the same time was contemporary of Pilate. He recorded it in three incidents during the administration of Pilate:

First, concerning on the Roman standards or imperial insignia, which the Jews regarded as the

idolatrous because they bore images of the emperor and other sacred symbols. Despite the fact that it had not been done before, Pilate ordered the standards to be taken to Jerusalem. The people protested and petitioned Pilate to remove the standards. The Pilate refused, had them secretly surrounded and would have had them slaughtered but for the fact that they put up no resistance and were all willing to die as martyrs. It would not have been seen politically expedient to kill them all in cold blood. However, during the second clash between Pilate and the Jewish crowd, this time about his use of the Temple funds to build an aqueduct, he had them surrounded and battered with clubs. Some were killed and others seriously hurt. The last incident led to his downfall. He was sent back to Rome on account of it. This time it concerned a group of Samaritans who had gathered on Mount Gerizim for the innocent enough purpose of searching for the sacred vessels which they believed Moses had hidden there. Pilate sent his army out to slaughter them (Josephus, 1998).

Here, we see the picture of Pilate being described by Philo and Josephus as the kind of person he was in his time. As being testified by the two, it is clear now that Pilate is a ruthless governor and at the same time, he contributed to crucifying Christ. What makes the name of a corrupt governor official included in Creed? The question can be answered by these reasons. First, Pontius Pilate was a historical figure, and no one doubts his existence during the first century was significant. Indeed, Flavius Josephus and Philo mentioned Pontius Pilate. Second, the Gospels narrated that Christ was sentenced to death by this Roman official. This claim emphasizes the historicity of Christ's passion, crucifixion, and death. The passion narrative is not something invented by the Evangelists as what other opponents wanted to claim. Christ was put to death and the accounts of Roman history could attest to it because it was Pontius Pilate, a Roman official, who sentenced Christ to die on the cross. Thus, what is Good Friday? When did it happen? Good Friday is a real historical event of Christ's passion, crucifixion, and death on the cross for the salvation of all that happened in Mt. Calvary together with the two thieves and other historical figures on Friday, April 3, A. D. 33.

### **Misconceptions on Suffering**

In Good Friday celebration, we observe from other places that there are many people who are undertaking suffering like crucifying themselves. Others use scourge for flagellation, and some carry a heavy cross barefoot and walk around the city. They wanted to suffer through asking forgiveness from the Lord. These beliefs are present in our country and even in my home place. This has become part of our culture and tradition that many believe nowadays. But one might ask, is this really a Christian way or a Church teaching of repenting for our sins? Accordingly, there was a man who plays the role of Jesus Christ during Holy Week in the Philippines. He is Ruben Enaje who portrayed Jesus Christ's crucifixion and death on Good Friday in front of crowds of locals and tourists in a village north of Manila. He was crucified for the 33rd time last April 19, 2019, on Good Friday. It is a real-life crucifixion as an expression of his faith. And for him he will continue the tradition to remind the world about the plight of Jesus Christ (<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/04/19/asia/philippines-crucifixion-practice-33rd-year-trnd/index.html>).

This is considered a popular piety in expressing one's faith through suffering. But to be clear, the Church in the Philippines, however, has no official teaching with regard to inflicting pain of oneself as a way of repentance. In fact, the Church condemns the practice, and the public health officials discourage such expressions like crucifixion for health purposes. Catholic bishops warned the faithful against resorting to extreme forms of sacrifice on Good Friday including crucifixion and self-flagellation. Archbishop Jose Palma of Cebu, president of the Philippine Bishops' Conference said: "Let us concentrate more on the prayers. These are the wonderful ways of celebrating Holy Week" and the real spirit of the observance of the Holy Week is "conversion of oneself". Another is Bishop Joel Baylon of Legazpi, Chairman of the Bishops' Commission on Youth, also reminded the faithful that there are "other forms of sacrifice and suffering that would lead to real conversion. "The Lord appreciates all these forms of sacrifices, but sometimes the kind of sacrifice that we impose on ourselves is not what the Lord wants us to do," (<https://www.catholicregister.org/home/international/item/16063-philippine-bishops-warn-faithful-against-ritual-crucifixions>).

Therefore, it should be understood that on Good Friday, the best way to do a sacrificial gesture is not to crucify oneself literally but pray before the cross, asking for forgiveness and sin no more. In this way, we can say that our suffering would be pleasing and redemptive for we offer and unite all our sufferings to Christ on His cross.

### **The Theology of Suffering**

Suffering is one of the inevitable realities in our life. It is a reality in our day-to-day life that all of us should accept. We cannot but coexist and be attuned with it because it is part and parcel of our existence. Of course, we cannot deny the fact that no one wants to suffer. All of us wanted to escape and avoid any suffering in any form in our life. However, there is wisdom in suffering.

According to Pope John Paul II:

Suffering is a condition of our membership in the human race. The pope writes that suffering is the "universal theme that accompanies man at every point on earth, it coexists with him in the world." It is "the daily bread of human beings, the permanent condition of life in every age." In these words, John Paul reminds us that we can't escape suffering because to live is to suffer - a lesson that our many hurts and tears have come to teach us all too well (Schroeder, 2008, p. 12).

However, others would not agree regarding this claim that there is wisdom in suffering because of the irreconcilable principle that it pertains to. Such that, there is no good in suffering. We can attest to this by mentioning Epicurus a Greek philosopher in Hellenistic period whose philosophical principle in life is anchored on pleasure that says: "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you will die". For him, the supreme limit of pleasure is attained in the absence of sorrow (Yarza, 1994, p. 198-199). His teaching became influential even today because it gives Catholics an idea that what is important is pleasure as means to attain happiness. It simply says that there is no room for suffering for it cannot give life and happiness. On the other hand, this is different from masochism, which sees pain and suffering as pleasurable. These principles are far from the Magisterium's teaching but is still present in our modern time. The famous dictum "eat,

drink and be merry for tomorrow you will die" is mentioned by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:32. "Adam's disobedience brought death for all; Jesus, the new Adam, has merited that all should rise. The Christian's salvation will be perfected after death when his body rises at the end of time". This simply means that we are not meant for this world, but we are meant to heaven and be united with the Creator. But why do we suffer? This can only be answered in Scriptures. In the Bible story, we know that Job experienced a tremendous suffering. In the Old Testament suffering is a punishment for sin. We can see this in some Biblical accounts that when the people of Israel committed sin they will repent and will ask sign from a prophet who will mediate to the God for asking repentance. But this does not mean that all suffering is the result of one's sin or punishment for one's sins. Here, the story of Job in the Old Testament confirms the suffering of the just man. The story of this just man who, through no fault of his own, suffered great tribulations in life. He lost his sons and daughters, his possessions, and was afflicted with a grave sickness. In this horrible situation, three of his old friends came to him and expressed the purpose of convincing him that his misfortunes & sufferings were the result of Job's serious sins. His three old friends said this because they were convinced that misfortune and suffering always strike a person as punishment sent by God for sins.

They saw it as sent by God for justice. The opinion of his friends manifested a conviction that can be found also in the moral conscience of humanity, namely: the objective moral order demands punishment for transgression, sin, and crime. From this point of view, suffering appeared as justified evil. It explains that suffering as punishment for sin found support in the order of justice which, in turn, was reminiscent of the statement of one of Job's friends, "As I have seen, those who plough iniquity and sow trouble, reap the same" (Job 4:8). However, he challenged the truth of this principle which necessarily identified suffering with punishment for sin. He did this on the basis of his own life. He was aware that he did not deserve such punishment. In fact, it was quite the opposite because he lived a good life. He was righteous before the eyes of God. He was confused and asked God the cause of his suffering. God answered not by justifying His

actions before mankind. He answered by declaring that he was innocent. And so, he was content with the answer. He recovered his attitude of humility and trust, which he had lost because of his friends who accused him of sin. That is why he was being punished. So, he must have sinned. His suffering is the suffering of someone who is innocent. The Book of Job gives us no answers to the “why” of suffering. That is not God's purpose. God wanted to show that suffering is not necessarily the result of one's sins. Suffering in a positive way of understanding can be a steppingstone for glory. In other words, any innocent or sinner can suffer because there is wisdom in it, which is beyond human capacity to know. For us Christians, suffering is a blessing and if you offer this suffering to Christ, then, it is a redemptive suffering. Thus, it is to be understood that even Christ, the begotten Son of the Highest, is not exempted of suffering.

His experience was comparable to Job because he himself experienced it physically with all the mockery and brutal execution that he endured. He is the Just One, but He suffered extreme passion, crucifixion and death. But Christ, being the Just One, is different from being a just man of Job. Job lived out a good life and made righteous before God yet he experienced suffering. Whereas Christ who is a Just One is a Divine who will pay through His Blood all the sins of the faithful. That is why Christ is necessary to die as being foretold by Isaiah so that, the salvific plan of the Father be fulfilled in Christ. Joseph P. Whelan, in his article “Salvation through Suffering” stated:

No mystery assails the heart of the human person so immediately or so scandalizes one's faith in God and in oneself as does the mystery of suffering. Nothing casts more doubt upon the nature of salvation or upon the value of this world as does the mystery of suffering. It is thrust upon every person. It is carved into the marrow of one's bones and spirit. If one is pastorally inclined, one confronts it even more fearfully in the lives of others. The human person cannot escape the ravages of suffering. It is omni-present: a battering experience, the history of which one fears and the future of which one can be certain (Whelan, *Salvation Through Suffering*, p. 28).

In other words, suffering is necessary for salvation. Similarly, Christ must die as the worthy offering for the sins of humanity. For he is the only qualified to be an offering as a recompense for the sins of the people committed. St. Paul's understanding of the mystery of suffering begins with Christ because the Apostle views suffering within the context of the cross. In his letter to the Philippians, he speaks of Jesus' suffering from two points of view:

First from the perspective of his humility and suffering, and secondly with a focus on his glorification. Jesus' humility and suffering “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:6-8). Jesus' Glorification “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11) (Kasemann, 1970, p. 1).

Moreover, Jesus' suffering, which the saint called the folly of the cross, was central in St. Paul's preaching: “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Corinthians 1:18, 22-25). Although St. Paul used the cross as his point of departure, he also underscored its connection with the perfection of Jesus' human nature and our salvation. Consider his insightful reflection on Jesus' agony in Gethsemane where he submissively offered the priestly sacrifice of himself to the Father: “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear”. Suffering to St.

Paul was an experience he endured which eventually ended with martyrdom. He was scourged with many lashes. He was beaten with rods, and he was stoned once. He suffered a shipwreck three times and faced drowning adrift in the sea for a night and a day. The Jews who wanted to kill him hounded him across the Roman Empire, and false brethren betrayed him (2 Corinthians 11:24-28). St. Paul acknowledged, “weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities” (2 Cor 12:10). And he never asked, “Why me?” Similarly, he never attempted to explain to suffering Christians, “Why you?” Rather he focused on the inner meaning of suffering, which explains how he and other Christians could endure so many struggles and maintain their positiveness and inner peace. Therefore, it is to be understood that there is wisdom behind suffering that leads to salvation. But this could only be understood through the cross because through it, the final mission of the saving passion of Christ is accomplished. St. Paul expressively preached the cross and endured suffering as he passionately follows the Lord. As Jesus said: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Christ did not promise us paradise without doing something. Here it simply means that our suffering in life is our cross that we should carry out in our day-to-day life. By doing so, salvation awaits us. We should believe on St. Paul’s teaching because he is a witness of the graces that he received while he experienced many sufferings in life.

Then, what is the theology behind the suffering of Christ? It is no other than his ultimate love to humanity. There can be no ultimate reason than the great love of the Father and the Son to people. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:16-17).

### **Redemptive Suffering**

Christ who suffered from the hands of his enemies never attempts once to fight back those offenders. Rather, he endured and embraced whole-heartedly the sins and oppression of the people because behind those sufferings lies victory that is salvation. From this attitude, we can learn something from Him and that is,

there is wisdom in suffering, and we believe that it is a grace. Theologically, it has relevance with the question of God as to why they go through suffering. With so many sufferings that we have, God teaches us valuable lessons through suffering. We may experience suffering for us to make us humble, grow stronger, and equip us to comfort others in their suffering. Moreover, we humans cannot deny the fact that we are also experiencing suffering in many forms such as war, famine, injustices, killings, hunger, poverty, spiritual crisis and many more. We often question the existence and the goodness of God and the existence of evil when we experience such thing. In fact, in the Bible story there are Prophets and other Bible personalities, saints and ordinary people who experienced suffering. It is a human reality that we are experiencing such suffering in our lives. But how can we address this? It is true that we are experiencing this but if we keep complaining and not doing something good for it to be a foretaste of heaven, then we will never learn to grow. The passion of Christ teaches us to be more self-giving in uniting our sufferings in His suffering for it to become redemptive. We are all capable of suffering because we are not divine. Though, Christ is exempted because from the very beginning His nature is Divine and he took a human nature for our sake. Thus, Christ is fully human and divine, and we should understand His wisdom.

St. John Paul II teaches us that in our search for meaning in suffering, “We must call on the God, our Father and Creator, as the author of the Book of Wisdom did” (Schroeder, 2008, p. 58). “With you is wisdom, who knows your works. Send her forth from the holy heavens that she may be with me and toil. For she knows and understands all things” (Wisdom. 9:9, 11). Perhaps, this could be the best thing to do for He knows everything.

But what does redemptive suffering really mean? The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that it is “union with the passion of Christ” (CCC, 1521). When we experience sufferings in any forms, we should unite ourselves closely to Christ’s passion because in a certain way we are configuring ourselves to the Savior’s redemptive passion. Since suffering is a consequence of original sin, and now it acquires new meaning. It becomes a participation in the saving work



of Jesus. Therefore, the passion of Christ encourages us to unite our sufferings to Him for it to become salvific. Christ, even if He has human nature, never complained about the difficult suffering that He experienced but He willingly accepted it wholeheartedly and commended His life to the Father. Such dependency is a requirement to attain salvation. So, our whole trust to God in commending ourselves to Him is necessary for us to have redemption when time comes. Lastly, we can say that our salvation is both human cooperation and grace.

### CONCLUSION:

Good Friday celebration is a significant event in the life of the Catholic Church which is annually celebrated. People in this celebration have lots of the malpractices, superstitious beliefs, and misconceptions which they believed are of significance to their faith. Some of which are wounds that would take a longer time to heal, taking a bath after 3pm is not allowed, evil spirits' presence is stronger during holy week and staring at mirrors after 3pm should be avoided. Others are going to the beach for vacation in holy week, crucifying oneself, doing flagellation and some will go to a cave or cemetery and will offer prayers for the dead. These practices are far from what the Catholic Church is teaching us, and this should be corrected. Good Friday is indeed rich in meaning. It is not simply a commemoration of sorrow because our Lord died on that day but rather, a celebration of victory because through Christ's passion and death on the cross salvation of the world becomes possible. His love for humanity becomes the unfathomable reason for us to be justified before the Father. Therefore, the celebration of Good Friday should be understood in the mind of Magisterium on the theology of suffering and cross of Christ. This is the proper way of understanding Good Friday and its celebration which people mostly do not know and often forget & misunderstood.

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I declare no potential conflict of interest.

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