**Homily** **for the 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*Rev. Francis D. Kim*

       Sometimes, we ask: Why do innocent people, good people have to suffer? Must we suffer in order to be saved? Do we have to suffer in order to be good? Why is it, we ask, that good and evil can coexist? Why is it that an absolutely good Good allows evil to exist?

        God created us with freedom of choice, thereby allowing us to choose against what is good, even against Himself. It is His love.

        Today’s readings present us with a fact about suffering that we don’t often notice, a fact which we experience more often than we think. Suffering can be tragic; suffering can be oppressive. Our readings, though, remind us that suffering can also be redemptive.

        The word ‘redemption’ is a legal word from Old Testament times. It means ransom or exchange. When a relative was in slavery, a person could buy that individual out of slavery to ransom him or to redeem him by giving up something valuable or giving oneself for a period of time in order to free that person. You were then his or her redeemer. You exchanged yourself for him or for her.

        Jesus Christ is our redeemer. We might imagine that since Jesus died and rose from the dead, the price has been paid for our redemption from slavery of sins. Jesus sacrificed His life to save us.

        Our readings today are about this redemptive suffering. In the first reading, we hear of the suffering servant of God who gives his life to bring justification and forgiveness to others. The prophet Isaiah says, “He will justify many.”

        The second reading, the letter to the Hebrews describes Jesus as the great high priest whose sacrifice on the cross opened for us the way to salvation. And, in the Gospel, Jesus concludes by saying, “The Son of Man came to give His life as a ransom for many.”

        We all want to share Christ’s glory in the kingdom of heaven, like James and John. They asked Jesus, “Grant us to sit one at your right and the other at your left.” Is that not so human? We all have the same desire to be honored and to get the glory in heaven. Then, Jesus speaks to James and John, and the rest of the Apostles, and really to all of us as well.

        “Can you drink the cup that I must drink?” Jesus is asking to them and to us, “Can you endure with me the suffering of the cross and sacrifice to save others?” He is calling, “I do invite you to share my fate. To be with me as the suffering servant.” That was the calling of the disciples.

        For us, the call is the same. To serve, to become the salve to the needs of others. To join Christ and drink from the cup He drank from.

        We are not to be only consumers of grace or spectators of God’s grace. We are called to be partners in the work of redemption. That partnership involves suffering. It is a suffering that is not in vain. Our suffering and sacrifice can truly help set others free from evil.

        So, Jesus says to us today, “Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the salve of all.” That is our call which is to serve one another. To serve each other, we need to sacrifice ourselves for others. It is a great love that Jesus showed us.

        Love other people, especially those who are unkind to us. Smile to them, and forgive them. Be patient to them. It is a great love and sacrifice.

        Always remember, the Resurrection follows the Crucifixion. The miracle is, by following Jesus’ example of self-giving, the servant finds life becomes so peaceful, so full of joy. Self-giving turns out to be a wonderful way to live.