

I imagine that at some point in our lives, we have all seen someone examine a piece of art that caught their eye. Almost inevitably, they walk up to study it as close as they can, examining every single minute detail, before stepping away to adore it from a distance. This is especially interesting to do when studying an Impressionist painting by someone like Van Gogh or Monet. When you view the painting up close, the disconnected blobs of color overwhelm the mind and almost refuse to make sense. It is only when you step back to view the painting from a distance that it resolves itself into beauty and is able to be truly adored.

In a sense, this same process can guide our reflection today. We have come here today to adore the Cross, and the first step in this process is stepping closer so that we can study this mystery in more detail. When we do so, much as with a Van Gogh, we are almost instantly overwhelmed by the details. Even a brief sketch is filled with seemingly disconnected events that deserve to be reflected on independently of the others.

After praying in the Garden, Jesus is betrayed by a friend. When others try to come to His defense, He says, “Put your sword into its scabbard. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father gave me?” As we know, He continued to drink from the cup of suffering in the hours that followed. He is betrayed yet again by friends who swore to never leave His side. He is beaten by the guards, buffeted and spit upon. He is scourged and crowned with thorns before being cruelly mocked. Eventually, He is forced to carry His cross to Golgotha where He is crucified. After entrusting His Mother to His beloved disciple and asking for something to drink, He says, “It is finished” and bows His head and dies.

Up close, the story of Christ’s Passion is ugly and brutal and overwhelming. It is hard to understand this scene and find any beauty within it. And yet, as we step back it resolves itself into beauty. In our first reading we heard, “Yet it was our

infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured... he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins; upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; but the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all.”

Jesus drank from the cup which His Father gave Him out of love for us. He knew that we were unable to bear our sufferings on our own... unable to be reconciled to God through our own strength, so He bore our sufferings for us. When He was betrayed by His friends, He bore every betrayal that we will ever experience in our own lives. When He was beaten and scourged, He bore every punishment that we justly deserve and suffered every type of oppression that we will ever experience. When He was crowned with thorns and stripped of His robes, He bore every humility that has ever been heaped upon us. When He handed over His mother, He suffered every division and loss we will experience within our families. When He was parched with thirst, He experienced every physical longing. And when He finally died, He bore our death so that we might live.

As we heard in our second reading, “we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.” We adore the Cross because in it we find beauty. In it, we discover that our God has walked every path of suffering so that we do not have to walk it alone. So together, let us together confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.