

FR JUSTIN FORD, HOMILY, GOOD FRIDAY, 10TH APRIL 2020

‘Although he was Son, he learnt to obey through suffering; but having been made perfect, he became, for all who obey *him*, the source of eternal salvation.’ Those words in our Second Reading from the Letter to the Hebrews express the mystery at the heart of salvation: Christ’s obedience to the Father, substituting for our disobedience. And then how human beings can share in that, by our own obedience to Christ.

For Jesus, his suffering and death weren’t some tragic twist of events. They were at the heart of the plan for the salvation of the world that he’d willed from the start, with the Father and the Holy Spirit. God the Son came into this world in order to offer his life for us.

By freely allowing himself to be put to death, Jesus in his humanity obediently followed the loving divine plan to save us. Because he’s truly God, his sacrifice of love and obedience which he offered on behalf of the human race, that sacrifice has unlimited divine value. But because he’s also fully human, it was truly one of us, our own brother, who paid the price of our sins.

And that’s how he wins back eternal divine life for the human race. He re-unites us with God, opening the channels of grace and salvation for all who will accept them. And we accept them by allowing Jesus to unite us to himself; we accept them by living in union with him, with his love, his obedience.

And remember, Jesus offered his sufferings, not just for the world in general: he suffered for me. Those are the words of St Paul, ‘The Son of God loved me and gave himself for me.’ And the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us, ‘Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony and his Passion, and gave himself up for each one of us’ So, not just all of us as a group, but each of us individually.

Some Protestant communities talk about the great importance of each person accepting Jesus as their *personal* Lord and Saviour. It’s not a phrase that Catholics commonly use, and yet the reality it expresses is something we truly believe in. Jesus would have gone to his death for me, even if I was the only person in the world who needed to be saved.

The more we each appreciate that Jesus knew me and died for me personally, to save me from hell and bring me to heaven, the more we realise that, then the more we’re moved to offer him in return every moment of our whole lives, our whole existence, in gratitude, in loyalty, in unbounded love.