

Homily from Good Friday

April 3, 2026

Today's rather late snow reminded me of a much larger storm in the early 1970s of my childhood. Back then, there was no Weather Channel, no up to the moment forecasts about how much snow would fall in which county, etc. My siblings and I had walked to the other side of the lake on which we lived for a birthday party at the home of some schoolmates. Since it was a relatively warm spring day, we were not warmly dressed.

What happened during the course of the several-hour party must have been the proverbial "cold front" coming through that shifted the weather dramatically in an exceptionally short interval. Before long, the temperature had plummeted and snow began to fall, then to swirl and blow, creating an instant white out.

The parents of our classmate began to spring into action, calling all the parents to arrange to get us home safely. Instead of driving, however, my dad decided to walk perhaps one mile over to the party and guide us home. Out of the storm, dad appeared with a large sack with coats, gloves, hats and boots. Then, once dressed, he instructed us literally to follow in his footsteps. I recall that there were places where the snow had already drifted, and dad had instructed us to step in his footsteps through the storm. Before long, we were safely home, before one of dad's patented roaring fires in the fireplace, telling the story of the freak spring snowstorm and our deliverance safely through it.

In the extraordinary Passion According to St. John, Jesus has found himself not in a snowstorm, but instead a firestorm of suffering and death:

- In the garden of Gethsemane, he is seized by soldiers, "with lanterns, torches and weapons"
- He is arrested, bound, and taken before the High Priests Annas and Caiaphas
- He is struck in the face by one of the temple guards, "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he is shouted at
- Taken before Pilate, the crowd shouts with hostility, not for his release, but instead that of the criminal Barabbas
- Pilate has him flogged, and he is mocked with a crown of thorns
- The maddened crowd shouts, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" multiple times
- He was forced to carry his cross through the midst of an angry crowd and then he's crucified among criminals.

While seemingly defeated, rather what Jesus was actually doing was making a way for us through the storm of suffering and death as he promised earlier in the Gospel, when he spoke of his plan to deliver us from death to eternal life. There he said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going you

know the way. I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me."

Jesus has gone through this "storm" of the *Via dolorosa* and Calvary to make a way through death for each of us, that he might "come back again and take us to himself." His way of the cross is nothing less than our way to salvation.

Today's second reading, from the letter to the Hebrews, spoke of Jesus, our great high priest, that great mediator between God and humanity, who was "when he was made perfect became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."

At the heart of the Biblical word for salvation is the sense of safety. Jesus' walking of the way of the cross is nothing less than his walking as our great high priest through that most ferocious storm we face, death, so that he could come back and lead in his footsteps through this most fearful storm to the warmth and safety of eternal life prepared in His Father's house for all his beloved children. That's us!

In the way of the cross, Jesus, the way and the truth, is our life. This is why today is Good Friday. For in his love, Jesus has opened our path through the storm, a safe path, to the warmth and peace of eternity in the resurrected life that our Savior has won for us. In this and every storm of life, we need not be afraid!