

Why Is the Day Christ Died Called “Good” Friday?

Greetings!

You may have noticed that children are sometimes startled when they learn that we call the day that Christ suffered and died “Good” Friday. How can anything as horrifying as Jesus’ suffering and Death possibly be “good?”

To understand this description of the day Christ died, it is helpful to know that as far back as 1290, the days the Church considered holy were called “good.” Our Orthodox brothers and sisters refer to Good Friday as “the Holy and Great Friday.” In Germany, the day is referred to as “Sorrowful Friday” (*Karfreitag*).

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Why do we, in the English-speaking world, continue to speak of a day in which we recall the whipping, torturing, and Death of Jesus as “good”?

We call this dark day “good” because with the suffering that is part of it came God’s gift to us. As Catholics, we believe that in the mystery of our Lord’s Death and Resurrection is the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. This day was good for *us*. It is the day that we were set free.

So much of what we experience in these holy days leading up to Easter is paradoxical—things that seem contradictory are held as true. In the Cross, suffering and forgiveness meet. In Jesus, we encounter the one who was God and human. As we journey with Jesus to Easter, we experience that the Second Person of the Trinity “was” but also “is.” In his surrender to God’s will, we see strength.

We can reflect as families on the paradox of calling this day “good.” Are there times that we have experienced darkness but also light? If we read the Beatitudes, we see that things are not always what they seem. The poor, the meek, the suffering are the ones who triumph in the end.



Christ’s death on the Cross brought about the goodness of the Resurrection, which freed us from our sins.

Without Good Friday, we cannot receive the joy of Easter. Without Good Friday, God’s plan would not have been accomplished. The prophet Isaiah notes the mystery in God’s work when he says, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” Good Friday invites us to dwell in the mystery of the paradox of God.