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GOOD FRIDAY MESSAGE: CHRIST ON THE CROSS HAS ALSO BORNE AWAY OUR PAIN

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Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:42-43)

Once, in the garden of paradise the serpent lied that there was no death. Yet there was. Today the spiritual enemy continues to lie and says that there is no life, that with death everything ends. Yet there is! Jesus exposed this lie confirming that there is life and that eternity is not just a figure of imagination but a tangible reality.

Even to the criminal on the cross Jesus confirmed that he is not approaching an unknown and scary death alone. *"Today you will be with me in Paradise,"* Jesus said to the condemned and world forsaken man as words of hope.

All over the world death is mostly feared but sometimes also expected. A believing person desires to be with God because it is much better there. Reflecting on leaving this age, a Christian also reflects on Christ's resurrection. The empty cross at the grave reminds us that life triumphs over death. Christ did not remain on the cross. Christ did not remain in the grave either.

It is difficult for those who lack belief in the good news of the empty cross and grave, since they cannot see the hope of life everlasting. Today, let us have the love to share hope to those for whom there is no hope. Death is never the solution. The real solution is life.

The Apostle Peter said in his sermon on Pentecost that God has raised Jesus up, having loosed the pangs of death (Acts 2:24). We do not know what the pangs of death are, because we do not know what it feels like to be dead. At best we guess which pain is worse – that which the body feels or that which the soul feels. Jesus has come to enter into battle with this world's most serious and difficult worries. Death on the cross is no play but a truly painful experience. Likewise, true joy is felt because of the risen Lord who wants to give us the gift of life without pain. He on the cross has also borne away our pain.

Are we ready to accept this painless eternal life? Was the criminal on the cross ready for Jesus to send him to Paradise? Yes, of course! Likewise, we on Good Friday wait for the approaching Easter morning with the message of the Resurrected One: *"I was dead, and*

see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades.” (Revelation 1:18)

May God help us, so that the joy of the resurrected Lord would fill everyone’s heart and none would be left without that joy. Like the criminal on the cross, we have sinned. Still, we desire for the mercy of God who has seen our agony and heard our prayers. Through the resurrection of God’s son, Jesus Christ, God has given us faith and hope, that on the day of our death God is waiting for us in God’s kingdom, where we and all the faithful will be together with God in Paradise.