

There's a quote from Confucius that is "to know what is right and not do it is the worst kind of cowardice," and if you think about it we as Catholics say the same thing in a sense in the words to the confetior when we say "what I have failed to do." Because in life, while we might not think of ourselves as a bully or all that bad of a person, sometimes it can be easy to get caught up in the wrong crowd or to just close our eyes to what is wrong.

On a sunny afternoon, a young man by the name of Marius Forte, who at the time was 15, found himself walking home from his school in Vienna. He attended the international school there because although his mother did not speak English, she loved America and everything the United States of America represented. She had lived through World War II and was grateful to the United States for what it had done to fight communism and Hitler.

Marius didn't particularly enjoy school, so it was with a happy heart that he set out on the beautiful Viennese roads. As he came to a crosswalk, he noticed a crowd of people standing around looking at something he could not see. At first, he thought it was just some street artists, of which there were many in Vienna, performing their acts to a crowd, but as he approached to satisfy his curiosity, he realized it was a very serious fight between three older teens and a younger teen. To the amazement of Marius, no one in the crowd did anything to prevent this uneven match.

He stood for a moment, assessing the situation. He didn't personally know anyone in the fight, nor did he recognize any of the people, mainly kids, who were watching. After about a minute, he sprinted through the crowd to stop the brawl, yelling at the aggressors.

At first, they ignored him and kept beating up the scrawnier kid. So he grabbed one of them, and they were pretty evenly matched, and he slugged him as hard as he could. As he went down, one of the others turned on him. Marius was amazed at this point that none of the bystanders had come to his aid. He grappled with the second thug and punched him too. But this served only as a distraction, which allowed the third bully to continue his vicious attack on their original defenseless young victim, pummeling the boy relentlessly. The first bully got up to confront Marius again, and he took a few hits, but he would not give up the fight.

Finally, after what seemed like a very long time, one young guy came to his aid. And again after a short while, a second, then a third, and a fourth lined in to confront the attackers and break up the fight. Eventually once they outnumbered the thugs, they gave up and ran off like the cowards they were.

Marius had a few bruises and his shirt was torn but he was okay. The young teen victim did not fare so well. He was bloodied all over and needed help. While aiding him, he could hear the police sirens getting closer. Someone had called them. He looked up at the crowd and Marius says he'll never forget the expressions on their faces. Some of them were indignant or some seemed ashamed, disgusted or angry, but many of them

simply stared, like sheep, unwilling to do anything. It seemed, he thought to himself, like they just didn't care.

Because the incident happened off school property, he didn't get into trouble, as the school frowned on fighting. But he told his mother about it, and she said she was proud of him. He learned an important lesson. She said: The masses are indifferent in most cases, not only to others' affairs, but even to their own. That crowds behavior sadly explains the rise of Stalin and Hitler, with whose atrocities they were intimately acquainted with in Vienna, and in fact throughout Europe. Those brutal totalitarians found easy prey in their people because they knew this little secret - that while many people will get upset, they are cowards and will do nothing to stop aggression. Marius was raised to be aware of that, and he was not going to let himself act like a sheep too.

So when confronted by brutality and bullying, he took a stand, even when others would not, and he became stronger for it. And while he was alone at first in trying to defend that boy from the bullies, eventually other people in the crowd joined in to help him. The good ultimately triumphed.

One of the striking things with the Passion is the crowds. There are two of them. There's the enthusiastic crowd whom we hear about at the start of the Mass, who cheer Jesus on when he enters Jerusalem on the back of the donkey, and then there is the mob that jeers at him on the cross. And if you think about it, we may very well belong to both of these crowds.

It can be easy to get sucked up into a gang and in that a person can lose one's individuality and consent to terrible deeds, as Marius saw on that walk home from school. What he saw though as he points out was nothing new. It happens throughout history in big and little ways all the time.

Today we start Holy Week, and we are invited to not become one of the crowd, but to become holy. To grow into an independence to separate us from the crowd. To become the person God has created us to become. But to do that takes work.

The crowd that cheers Jesus on is drawn by his power. "Hosanna" means "save us" and they think He will save them from the Roman power. Perhaps some of these same people, seeing that He's not a political leader, are then part of another crowd, the mob that turns on him to mock him.

It's worth thinking about ourselves this week, and asking ourselves, can I go against the crowd? Can I have the kind of bravery like Jesus has, in sacrificing for others?

It was only a couple of soldiers who actually crucified the Lord; and Pilate who handed him over. But what was it that allowed this evil to happen? It was sin in the world. It was silence. It was cowardice.

In life, we too can be silent like those other kids who were around Marius that day. As he said, so many just did not care. And we can do the same thing. We can say “I don’t want to get involved” when we suspect abuse in a family or marriage. When we see a person abusing drugs or alcohol. When we see a parent going too far to a coach or their child at a ball game. When loved ones fall away from the Church. When injustices happen in the world. When we see bullying at school or work.

In the Passion, traditionally the people would say the words “Crucify Him,” as we read it together, which admittedly probably made some feel uncomfortable. While that was changed recently, all us are culpable. And where that can happen is when we are silent and allow evil to prevail. To quote Father Berry, played by Karl Malden in *On the Waterfront* (perhaps not a bad movie to watch during Holy Week), when he confronts the other workers, he says to them when told to get back into his church:

“Some people think the Crucifixion only took place on Calvary. They better wise up. Taking Joey Doyle’s life to stop him from testifying is a crucifixion. And droppin’ a sling on Kayo Dugan because he was ready to spill his guts tomorrow – that’s a crucifixion! And every time the mob puts the crusher on a good man, tries to stop him from doing his duty as a citizen – it’s a crucifixion. And anybody who sits around and lets it happen, keeps silent about something he knows has happened, shares the guilt of it just as much as the Roman soldier who pierced the flesh of Our Lord to see if He was dead. Boys, this is my church! And if you don’t think Christ is down here on the waterfront, you’ve got another guess coming! Every morning when the hiring boss blows his whistle, Jesus stands alongside you in the shape up. He sees why some of you get picked and some of you get passed over. He sees the family men worrying about gettin’ the rent and gettin’ food in the house for the wife and the kids. He sees you sellin’ your souls to the mob for a day’s pay and what does Christ think of the easy-money boys who do none of the work and take all of the gravy? And how does he feel about the fellows who wear a hundred and fifty dollar suits and diamond rings, on your union dues and your kickback money? And how does He, who spoke up without fear against every evil, feel about your silence?... You want to know what’s wrong with our waterfront? It’s the love of a lousy buck. It’s makin’ the love of the lousy buck, the cushy job, more important than the love of man! It’s forgettin’ that every fellow down here is your brother in Christ! But remember, Christ is always with you. Christ is in the shape up. He’s in the hatch. He’s in the union hall. He’s kneeling right here beside Dugan. And He’s sayin’ with all of you, if you do it to the least of mine, you do it to me! And what they did to Joey, and what they did to Dugan, they’re doin’ to you. And you. You. All of you! And only you, only you with God’s help, have the power to knock ’em out for good.”

All of us have the power to knock out evil for good. Jesus showed us how; by standing with us. By loving us. By laying down His life. And he calls us to do the same for one another.

So as we enter into this solemn week, let’s never forget we too sin through our silence and through looking to the wrong things as did the crowds we hear about in the Passion. But Jesus knows that despite our sins, in us is so much good. So let that good

shine. Follow Jesus to Calvary, and journey with others through their pain and suffering. Be an agent of good in the world. For while evil seems to prevail on that first Good Friday, ultimately good triumphs. Jesus still stands with us today too through our pain and suffering, but He's given us a job to do as well. To stand with one another. Like Marius did on that day, may we too have the courage to do the right thing to combat evil. We can't be just content not to be the one causing the evil; we have to be the one getting in the fight for the good. Jesus did that for you and me and we were redeemed. May we have the courage to do the same for one another, for when we do, just as happened on Good Friday, darkness will not have the last word, but good will. Evil will always be in this world, but the good inside people will always outweigh it because that is how God hard-wired us. We just have to let that out though by doing the right thing So let's let that goodness shine by taking a stand against injustice, but being a person of fortitude and not cowardice, and remembering that when we do, we might take a few lumps as Marius did, or even be crucified by others through gossip and insults, but we also just might save a soul and help people to see the light instead of the darkness.