

Good Friday

Unless you are very fortunate, you will not be able to attend a Good Friday service this year, because of the virus that is afflicting the entire world. Therefore, our reflection today is much longer than usual. We suggest that you make a virtue of necessity, and go, slowly and prayerfully, through the day's gospel, which is John's account of Jesus' Passion. We have divided it into four sections; take them reflectively, and without hurry.

Listen to Part one: The arrest of Jesus

This passage comes immediately after Jesus has delivered his long talk to the disciples at the Last Supper.

What do you think is the significance of the arresting party carrying "lanterns and torches and weapons"? Why do you think they need them for one man?

Imagine the moment that they "fall to the ground". Why do you think this happens? How do you see it unfolding in your mind's eye?

Ponder for a moment Jesus' words about "the cup that the Father has given me"?

As we close this first part of today's scripture reflection, gather all your feelings together and form them into a prayer on behalf of or placed on the lips of all those suffering the effects of the pandemic today.

Now hear the story continue with part two: Peter's denial

Simon Peter is very prominent in this passage. Take a moment to ponder his role... Simon Peter and another disciple "followed Jesus"; what does that tell us?

Simon Peter is asked "You're not also one of his disciples, are you?" and replies "I am not". Why do you think he said this? What might have been going through his mind... place yourself in his shoes...

At the same time as Simon is being questioned, Jesus is also being interrogated. What differences do you notice?

The passage ends both quietly and dramatically: "at that moment, the cock crowed". Can you imagine for a moment how you might have felt at this moment?

Finally, in your own words, address some prayer to Jesus. You might find yourself in self-isolation, alone on Good Friday... Jesus understands, for at this moment in the story, he is so very alone here.

Listen now to part three of the passage: Jesus on trial

Here Jesus is on trial for his life, before the political authorities of Judah and Rome. Reflecting on the passage just read, who do you think dominates the scene? Why is this so?

The inscription put on the cross read "The King of the Jews". Is Jesus the king over your life at the moment? As you pray now, invite him to restore this in you...

Pilate asks, "What is Truth?", but the question is never answered. What would your answer be?

Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of this world"; where is Jesus' kingdom, then? Does this say anything at all about how we should be reacting to the Covid 19 pandemic?

Finally, as you reflect on this extraordinary episode, try to gather your feelings together and make them into a prayer to Jesus or to God.

Now listen to the final part of our Good Friday scripture: Jesus crucified and buried

This is how John's gospel tells the terrible story of Jesus' execution. Amongst the agony and sadness of the story, we hear Jesus utter the words: "here is your mother...here is your son". What do these words say to you? Even on the cross Jesus provides practical comfort for his mother and follower...Does this bring you comfort during this time of the pandemic and "lock-down"?

"Jesus bowed his head and gave up the spirit"; you could also translate this as "he handed over the Holy Spirit". What does this mean to you?

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus suddenly turn up, one a secret disciple, and the other one who had visited Jesus "by night", when he had been unable to understand Jesus' teaching. Does this help you to think about the role of disciples today?

Now listen once more to the text. Jesus is now dead, and apparently unable to help anyone else. Note the important phrases: "It is finished...Jesus bowed his head...blood and water came out". Does Jesus' physical pain, his agony and suffering, help you to form a prayer at this time of illness and suffering around the world?

At this moment of the passage as you gather your prayers together, who is Jesus to you right now? Gather your feelings into a prayer to God... Or even to Jesus at this time.