

Good Friday 2021



Welcome and introduction

This will be a quiet and contemplative service, so please ensure all cellphones, pagers, and other electronic devices are switched off or on silent, and avoid conversing with others during the service.

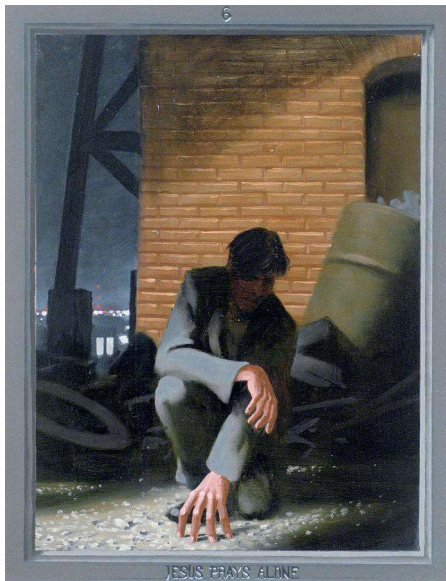
If you need to leave or enter the church during the service, please try to do so during one of the hymns or instrumental reflections, if possible. (But if you need to go, you need to go, so please don't suffer in silence!)

Please join with me in saying the prayer on the screen.

**Holy and everliving God,
look graciously on this your family
for which our Saviour Jesus Christ
was willing to be betrayed,
and to suffer death upon the cross;
and grant us to grow
into the fullness of new life in Christ
who now is alive and glorified
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.**

Amen.

1 Jesus prays in Gethsemane



First reading: Matthew 23:36-46

36 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' 37 He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. 38 Then he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.' 39 And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.' 40 Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? 41 Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' 42 Again he went away for the second time and prayed, 'My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.' 43 Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44 So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. 45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'

Meditation on reading

Earlier this year I did something slightly embarrassing. My team at work was being given a presentation about how the Emissions Trading Scheme works. I found this genuinely interesting and I tried to give it my maximum attention. But it was just after lunch, I had eaten a fairly sizeable meal, it was very hot, and the air conditioning wasn't doing its job properly, if it was working at all. And I very briefly fell asleep.

My boss gave the impression she thought it was hilarious. But I was mortified.

Jesus' friends are also having trouble staying awake. Even though they would surely know something is amiss. Jesus has been in the midst of a bit more trouble than usual during this last week in Jerusalem. They would

know he has made some powerful enemies. When Jesus had previously spoken of being handed over to the gentiles and being put to death, it didn't make such sense at first. Now it is all starting to come together.

To be fair, I suspect they are pretty tired. A lot has been happening lately. But this is when Jesus needs the support of his friends more than ever.

As I was reflecting on the scene of Jesus in anguish during his last night before his execution while his friends are dead to the world, it struck me that we are in no place to judge them. Because Jesus needs us as well. And we aren't always awake for him.

Silence

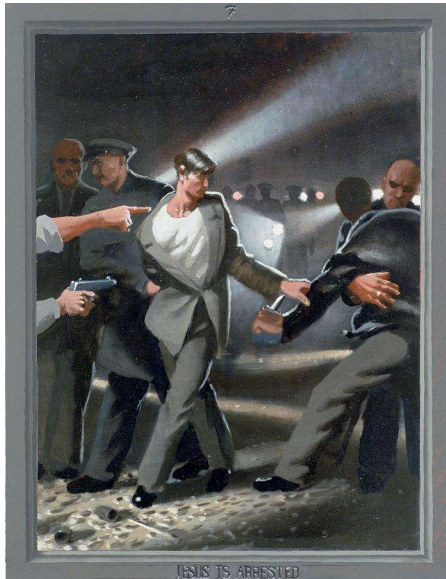
Lord Jesus, sometimes we are not there for you. And we are not there for you when you need us the most. Help us to always be awake to the needs of your kingdom.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Hymn: Go to dark Gethsemane

2 The betrayal and arrest of Jesus



Second reading: Matthew 26:47-56

47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. 48 Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.' 49 At once he came up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' and kissed him. 50 Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you are here to do.' Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. 51 Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. 52 Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. 53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?' 55 At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. 56 But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.' Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Meditation on reading

Judas Iscariot. The disciple who betrayed Jesus. His very name has become synonymous with treachery. The gospels certainly don't paint him in a very good light at all. Practically everywhere he is mentioned, he is referred to as the one who betrays Jesus. Or called a thief.

But are we being completely fair on Judas? Judas betrayed Jesus. Of that there is no doubt. But I am curious as to know why he did it. Was it just for 30 pieces of silver? Was it because he wanted to sabotage Jesus' mission? Was it out of weakness? Or was it, as has been suggested, because he wanted to spur him into some kind of action? We really don't know.

About 15 years ago, great excitement and controversy was unleashed when an English translation of the Gnostic Gospel of Judas was published. Not only was it attributed to none other than Judas Iscariot, it also offered a far

more positive depiction of Judas than what we usually get. It portrays Judas's actions as done in obedience to instructions given to him by Jesus, and that he alone amongst the disciples knew Jesus's true teachings. However this document was hardly new; it had been discovered decades earlier. It was not taken very seriously by the Church either. And rightly so too.

Another question that has left me wondering is what would have happened if Judas had not betrayed Jesus. While it would be easy to conclude that it wouldn't have changed very much, as the religious authorities already had Jesus in their sights and they would have caught up with him sooner or later, that would be pure conjecture. Rest assured I am not attempting to cast doubt on what Judas did nor am I trying to excuse him. But I am going to suggest that we also betray Jesus. We betray him we put our own comforts first while claiming to be followers of him, and when when we put the idols, we make for ourselves ahead of his kingdom.

Silence

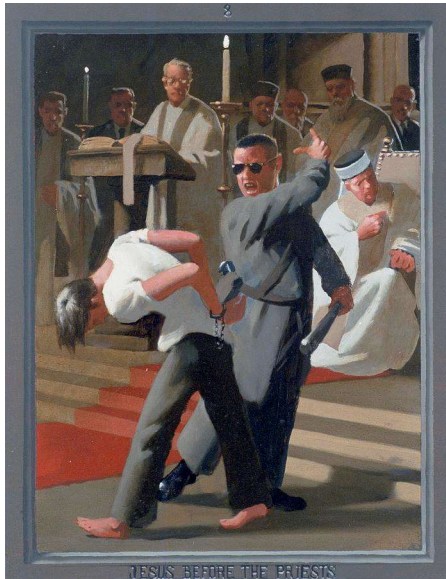
Lord Jesus, sometimes we betray you. We betray you when we put the cares, riches, and pleasures of the world ahead of following you, Grant us knowledge of your will for us, and the power to carry it out.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Hymn: Thy way, not mine, O Lord

3 Jesus before the high priest



Third reading: Matthew 26:57-58

57 Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered. 58 But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards in order to see how this would end. 59 Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, 60 but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward 61 and said, 'This fellow said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days." ' 62 The high priest stood up and said, 'Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?' 63 But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, 'I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.' 64 Jesus said to him, 'You have said so. But I tell you,

From now on you will see the Son of Man
seated at the right hand of Power
and coming on the clouds of heaven.'

65 Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. 66 What is your verdict?' They answered, 'He deserves death.' 67 Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, 68 saying, 'Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?'

Meditation on reading

One of the worst practices I saw in some places I used to work for was constructive dismissal. People would be bullied, set up, put under rigorous examination, or just had their lives made so miserable they would just get up and leave.

Sometimes false accusations would be incorporated, but often these would just show up the accusers for what they were.

Jesus has made enemies of the Jewish religious authorities. Collaboration with the Roman occupiers has given them comfortable lives, and this upstart from Galilee is threatening that, as well as showing up their hypocrisy.

But they have no concrete evidence against Jesus. So they have to resort to lies.

Do we always tell the truth about others? If we don't, we are not really in any position to criticise them.

Whatever we do to others, we do to Jesus. So if ever we slander, misrepresent, or even are simply unkind to others, we do this to him.

Silence

Lord Jesus, sometimes we slander you. We slander you when we are not what we claim to be. And we slander you when we tolerate lies and false accusations. May we have the courage to always be true to you and to always speak the truth, especially when others don't want to hear it.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Instrumental reflection

4 St Peter denies Jesus



Fourth reading: Matthew 26:69-75

69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, 'You also were with Jesus the Galilean.' 70 But he denied it before all of them, saying, 'I do not know what you are talking about.' 71 When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.' 72 Again he denied it with an oath, 'I do not know the man.' 73 After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.' 74 Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, 'I do not know the man!' At that moment the cock crowed. 75 Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: 'Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly.

Meditation on reading

A few times lately I have been asked what I am doing over Easter. Often by people who don't me know overly well, such as colleagues from different parts of the organisation I work for, and checkout girls in the supermarket. And I have to confess, there were times I wondered whether I should include the religious bits, like leading this service, or the one Stephen who just gave this reading and I will be leading at Remutaka Prison on Easter Day. But then I remembered St Peter.

We probably know more about St Peter than any of Jesus' other followers. He is the predominant disciple in the gospel stories and appears first in all lists of disciples in the New Testament.

At times, St Peter has acted and spoken rashly. Earlier he had boasted that he would follow Jesus, even to death, and now he denies even knowing him. Three times.

And wasn't like anyone particularly intimidating was asking him. In the text we heard today, the first two to call him out were slave girls. Which is about as far down the social pecking order in ancient Palestine as you can possibly get.

St Peter and Jesus will later reconcile. And his example shows how we can all serve God, in spite of our flawed natures and past mistakes. But that is a story for another day.

And we should not be too harsh on St Peter. Because we too deny Jesus. We deny him when our words and actions do not show us to be his followers. And when we are not what we claim to be.

Silence

Lord Jesus, we deny you. We deny you when we do not feed the hungry, because we are not feeding you. We deny you when we do not refresh the thirsty, because we are not refreshing you. We deny you when we do not welcome the stranger and the refugee, because we are not welcoming you. We deny you when we do not clothe those who need clothing, because we are not clothing you. We deny you when we do not care for the sick, because we are not caring for you. And we deny you when we do not visit the prisoner, because we are not visiting you. May we know that whatever we say and whatever we do, we do for you.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Hymn: Forsaken once, and thrice denied

5 Jesus brought before Pilate & the suicide of Judas



Fifth reading: Matthew 27:1-10

27 When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. 2 They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

3 When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. 4 He said, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' But they said, 'What is that to us? See to it yourself.' 5 Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. 6 But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money.' 7 After conferring together, they used them to buy the potter's field as a place to bury foreigners. 8 For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one on whom a price had been set, on whom some of the people of Israel had set a price, 10 and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me.'

Meditation on reading

You can't help but get to a certain age without accumulating a few regrets about things we did, or things we did not do, in the past. In many ways regret is a very negative emotion. We cannot change the past. But regret can also help us understand when we have done wrong. And while we cannot undo the past, regret can urge us to put things right.

But it needs to be let go of. Plunge too far into regret and the consequences can be catastrophic.

Judas now realises the consequences of his actions. It looks likely that he did not realise just how things were going to turn out, and he tries to return his ill-gotten gains to the religious authorities. Who, of course, now want nothing to do with him? And, in despair, he commits suicide.

It would be easy to overlook the fact that two of Jesus' disciples have betrayed him. Judas betrayed him by setting him up to be arrested. But St Peter also betrayed him by denying him.

However, St Peter has the courage and humility to face up to Jesus in his shame and accept forgiveness. Judas does not. And that is the difference between him.

I believe that if Judas had accepted that he was not beyond redemption and had fronted up to the risen Jesus, he would have been forgiven.

In the confession from our 'Eucharistic Liturgy for Creation and Redemption', we acknowledge that, "... some sins are plain to us; some escape us, some we cannot face". Is there anything in our past we cannot face? Now is the time to hand it over to Jesus.

Silence

Lord Jesus, sometimes we learn too late the consequences of our actions. May we have the humility to accept your grace, knowing that there is nothing we can do that can be so terrible as to separate us from your love for us.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Hymn: Beneath the cross of Jesus

6 Pilate questions Jesus



Sixth reading: Matthew 27:11-14

11 Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus said, 'You say so.' 12 But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. 13 Then Pilate said to him, 'Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?' 14 But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Meditation on reading

Pontius Pilate is an interesting historical character. He was the fifth governor of the Roman province of Judaea, serving under Emperor Tiberius from the years 26 or 27 to 36 or 37 of the Common Era.

Pilate is portrayed in the gospels as a man, who wants to free Jesus, but is a weak man swayed by the Jewish leaders. But this is not likely to be a very accurate depiction of Pilate's true character. Sources tell us he would later be recalled to Rome for excessive cruelty, even by Roman standards. Rome has not become the superpower of the ancient world through being soft, and what Jesus will suffer later in this journey is indicative of how brutally the Romans deal with those who get in their way.

But in the text we have just heard, Pilate is treating Jesus respectfully, for now anyway. But Jesus remains silent.

Sometimes there is a time for silence. And sometimes there is a time to speak. But now is a time for silence, while we wait to see where our journey with Jesus will lead us next.

Silence

Lord Jesus, sometimes there is a time to speak. And sometimes there is a time to be silent. But sometimes we are silent when we shouldn't be. Let us never be silent when you call us to speak out.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Hymn: My song is love unknown

7 Barabbas or Jesus?



Seventh reading: Matthew 27:15-23

15 Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. 16 At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. 17 So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, 'Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?' 18 For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. 19 While he was sitting on the judgement seat, his wife sent word to him, 'Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him.' 20 Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. 21 The governor again said to them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?' And they said, 'Barabbas.' 22 Pilate said to them, 'Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?' All of them said, 'Let him be crucified!' 23 Then he asked, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Let him be crucified!'

Meditation on reading

Sometimes a very bold tactical move can fail spectacularly, and someone who thinks they have come up with a seemingly foolproof plan finds themselves flabbergasted when it backfires completely.

We don't know much about Jesus Barabbas, or just plain Barabbas, depending on what gospel you are reading, other than that he was a particularly notorious prisoner.

The Gospels according to St Mark and St Luke tell us that he had committed murder during an insurrection against the Romans. It is likely that he is the worst offender Pilate has in custody, and Pilate deduces that the people will surely choose to have Jesus who is called the Messiah set free instead of Jesus Barabbas. But he gets it completely wrong. And the people made a choice he was not expecting.

Being human and therefore flawed, we sometimes make the wrong choices. And the consequences can be anything from unexpected to catastrophic.

If we are followers of Jesus the Christ, are we choosing his ways or are we making all the wrong choices?

Silence

Lord Jesus, sometimes we have to choose between your ways and the ways of your world. And sometimes we make the wrong choices. Help us to always choose your ways.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Hymn: When I survey the wondrous cross

8 Pilate hands Jesus over to be crucified



Eight reading: Matthew 27:24-28

24 So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.' 25 Then the people as a whole answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!' 26 So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Meditation on reading

Many popular proverbs and sayings have their sources in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. We have just heard the origins of one of them.

Sometimes, when people no longer want to have anything to do with another person, they say they wash their hands of them. My grandmother – who was always falling out with other people – used to say it all the time.

That expression, of course, derives from Pilate washing his hands with Jesus. He wants nothing more to do with him.

While Jesus may not pose a threat to Roman rule, he has become a threat to Roman-Jewish political relations. Condemning him to death will keep the Jewish leaders happy for a while and avoid the need to make a messy report to Emperor Tiberius about grumblings in the provinces.

St Matthew's account has a detail that is lacking from the other gospels, "Then the people as a whole answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!'" Unfortunately, this text had been misused over the centuries to justify antisemitism. And one thing I learned at theological college that really shocked me was just how terribly our Jewish brothers and sisters were treated by the Church until relatively recently. They were blamed for killing

Jesus. The Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan had no monopoly on persecuting Jews.

But we too sometimes wash our hands of Jesus.

When we ignore injustice and oppression, we wash our hands of him.

When we ignore oppression, we wash our hands of him.

And when we don't stand up for the vulnerable and the innocent, we wash our hands of him.

Silence

Lord Jesus, sometimes we wash our hands of you. We wash our hands of you when we remain silent in the face of injustice when we know it is wrong, because we know it is the easiest course to take. We wash our hands of you when we turn a blind eye to oppression. May we always stand up for the innocent and the oppressed.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Instrumental reflection

9 The soldiers mock Jesus



Ninth reading: Matthew 27:27-31

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. 28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' 30 They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. 31 After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

Meditation on reading

I sometimes see the funny side of things that are not necessarily appropriate to find humorous. Especially when it is so easy to unintentionally offend people

But there can never be anything funny about mocking someone. Mocking is never harmless fun. It is invariably scornful or contemptuous by nature, and without fail expresses a power imbalance in favour of the person who is doing the mocking. So it was commendable that there was widespread outrage.

But there is nobody to stand up for Jesus when he is mocked by the Roman soldiers. They are demonstrating their power over him, or, more precisely, the power of the Empire, so even if anybody is offended, they are not going to say anything. Jesus has a kingly purple robe and a crown of thorns put on him, and he is mocked, beaten and spat on. But, in line with his own commandment to turn the other cheek, he offered no resistance.

Sadly, it is not rare to see people being mocked or badly today. Or victimised or oppressed. And there is no such thing as neutrality in such situations.

As Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."

Silence

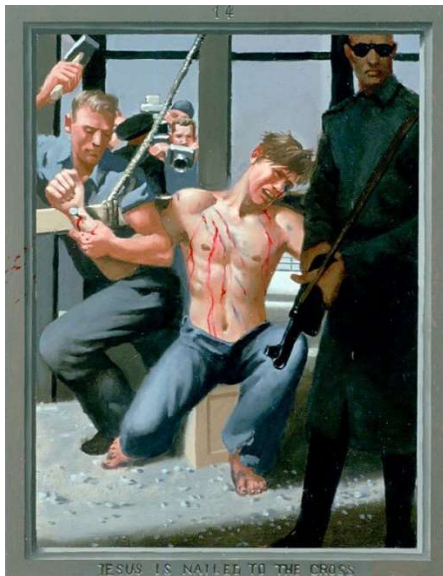
Lord Jesus, we mock you. We mock you when we treat others with contempt or disdain, because we do the same to you. And we mock you when we ignore the ill treatment of others. Help us to love another, as you love us.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Hymn: To mock your reign

10 The crucifixion of Jesus



Tenth reading: Matthew 27:32-58

32 As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. 33 And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), 34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. 35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; 36 then they sat down there and kept watch over him. 37 Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.'

38 Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. 39 Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads 40 and saying, 'You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.' 41 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, 42 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. 43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, "I am God's Son." ' 44 The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

Meditation on reading

Jesus is now on the final stage of his journey. It is approaching its terrible climax, and he has no other friends with him. We have all abandoned him.

Betrayed, abandoned, reviled, condemned, beaten and mocked, Jesus does not even have the strength to carry his own cross, and Simon of Cyrene is forced to carry it for him. Up that dreadful hill, where must endure the indignity of being stripped naked and suffer the agony of nails driven through his hands, hands that had brought healing to so many, and his feet, feet that carried him on his ministry throughout the land.

The mocking resumes. And not only do his enemies deride him, enemies who had been so frightened of him they had hatched a plot in secret to have him killed, but even his fellow prisoners being crucified on either side of him

also insult him. “He saved others; he cannot save himself,” cry the scribes and the elders and the chief priests. And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, ‘This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.’

There is no escaping the terrible reality of crucifixion. Yet so often it is overly sanitised, as realistic portrayals can upset people. But there is also a danger of going too far in the other direction, and there is also a danger we can go to the opposite extreme and being so focussed on the truly horrific details of Jesus’ suffering and death that we can’t see the love for the nails.

We are now at the foot of the cross. What do we do?

Silence

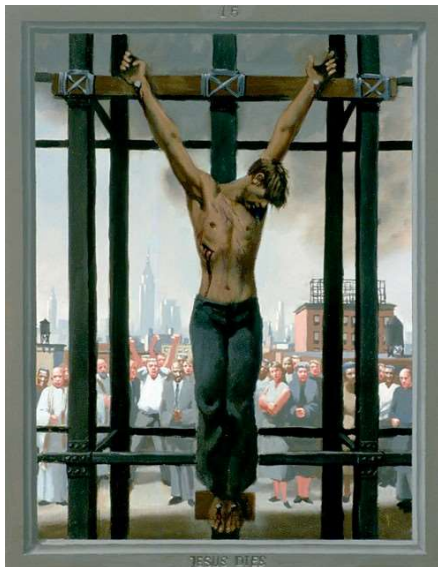
Lord Jesus, even while you are on the cross, we mock and deride you. We demand signs and miracles. And we don’t always have faith in you. Help us to understand that even when dying on a cross, you are always there for us.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Hymn: O Sacred head, surrounded

11 The death of Jesus



Eleventh reading: Matthew 27:45-56

45 From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. 46 And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' 47 When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'This man is calling for Elijah.' 48 At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. 49 But the others said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.' 50 Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. 51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. 53 After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. 54 Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

55 Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. 56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Meditation on reading

Jesus dies. But why does he have to die?

Humankind is estranged from God, but we have been given a way to be reconciled. And that is for God to become fully human in Jesus the Christ, experiencing the joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, and high hopes and broken dreams that are part of human life. Including death.

Jesus goes to the cross with self-sacrificing love, and he will triumph over death and sin with his resurrection, which will bring hope for us all.

But we reject him. We reject his message of love, hope, and mercy. We reject his good news for the poor, release for the captives, recovery of sight

for the blind and liberty for those who are oppressed. The cross is our response to him.

We kill him.

Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Silence

Lord Jesus, you have now died. And it was we who killed you. Please forgive us. As we kneel at the foot of your cross, help us to see and know your love for us, so that we may place at your feet all that we have and all that we are.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Instrumental reflection

You are now invited to place the pebble you were handed at the beginning of the service at the foot of the cross, to symbolically offer all that we all that we have and all that we are to Jesus.

12 The burial of Jesus



Twelfth reading: Matthew 27:57-61

57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. 58 He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 59 So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

Meditation on reading

Our journey ends, as it begun, in a garden. This time in a tomb in a garden belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. Jesus may have just died the most humiliating kind of death we can imagine, yet he is given a respectful burial. And one thing we can be certain of is that he is definitely dead.

I have heard it suggested that he will spend a couple of days unconscious, and then miraculously recover. But nobody could have survived what he has been through today. Nobody.

Jesus had performed many miracles while he was alive, such as healing the sick and feeding large crowds is one thing. But coming back from the dead after one has been mutilated by Roman scourging and crucifixion is something else. Not even his closest friends are expecting him to pull that off. So Jesus is buried.

But why is Jesus buried? Jesus had said numerous times he was going die but he would rise again, but nobody seemed to understand him. His friends do not yet appreciate what he had said just a few days previously, "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

What happens to Jesus in the tomb is also the greatest mystery of Easter. His suffering and death may have been publicly witnessed, what happens next will take place in the dark.

The stone is rolled into place. And it is now time for us to wait.

Silence

Lord Jesus, you have died a degrading death, and it is only in your burial that you are shown any dignity. As we mourn your death, wipe away our tears and grant us the patience to wait for the miracle of your resurrection and the hope it will bring to us all.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Please join with me in praying the prayer that Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Hymn: Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Depart in silence or remain for silent prayer or reflection.

