

Palm Sunday 28th March Reflection with Prayers

Reflection taken from:

Father Tom's Gospel Reflection 2020 from St John the Evangelist Church USA.

Each year on this Sunday the Church reads an account of the Passion of Jesus. As we listen to it, we are reminded of the cowardice of the followers who abandoned him in his hour of greatest need, of the wickedness of the religious leaders who plotted his death, and of the cruelty of the soldiers who carried out his execution. And we need to be reminded of these things, because we have a kinship with them. But that is not the purpose of the Passion reading. We hear too much bad news as it is.

The emphasis is not there. The emphasis is on Jesus, the central character in the story. What we are remembering is the fidelity, the courage, and the sheer goodness of Jesus. Against the darkness of Calvary his goodness shines all the more brightly. The day of his death is not called "Bad Friday" but "Good Friday." What makes it good is the love of Jesus. "Greater love no man has than to who lay down his life for his friends." It is that love that we are remembering this week.

The early Christians saw in the passion and death of Jesus the triumph of failure. With the help of the Scriptures, they came to understand that this was precisely how Jesus triumphed and entered into his glory. His glory cannot be separated from his passion.

On the surface, it may seem as if it was a defeat for Jesus. It was not a defeat. It was a victory. It was the triumph of good over evil, of love over hate, of light over darkness, and of life over death.

The Passion Story shows how Jesus responded to what was done to him. He absorbed all the violence, transformed it, and returned it as love and forgiveness. This was the victory of love over all the powers of destruction. There was nothing but love in him. Even when they nailed his hands and feet, he was loving. It helps to think about that when we are going through these hard times.

It is a consolation for us to know that Jesus suffered. Yet his suffering would have been wasted if he had not endured it with love. It was not Jesus' suffering that saved the world but his love. Anyone who pretends to love suffering is crazy. Suffering is something that you would give almost anything to avoid. Yet

we are glad to suffer for someone we love. Our love gives a meaning to our suffering. Jesus was the Good Shepherd dying because he loved his sheep.

Suffering that is merely endured does nothing for our souls, except perhaps harden them. It is the spirit in which we bear our burden that matters.

It is not suffering that redeems the world, but love. It is not our suffering that God wants but our love. However, love inevitably brings pain. But it also brings great joy. The Christian must not only accept suffering: he / she must make it holy. Love makes it holy. Every day I pray that these days of the Covid-19 pandemic in the world and in our country good will triumph over evil, love over hate, light over darkness, and life over death.

Prayers written by Carrie Snaden

Lord, whose son rode through the streets to a triumphant welcome, we welcome you today into our hearts. We ask you to enter our Church, permeating every hidden corner, so that we in turn may proclaim your name to the whole world. Remembering that many of those who shouted 'Hosanna' on Palm Sunday cried 'Crucify' on Friday, we ask you to help us remain steadfast in our faith. Brace your Church, O Lord, to enter into the unconditional sacrifice of the cross in order to walk with you thereafter in newness of life.

Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Bless those who lead the Church's worship at this solemn time. In the preaching of the word and the celebration of the sacraments draw your people close to you. We especially remember in our prayers everyone involved in the life of the Church across our Lands End benefice and beyond.

Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Creator God, we pray for all who work for justice and solidarity, and for all world leaders that they will continue to seek for an end to the suffering caused by war and violence, injustice and inequality, disease and prejudice, poverty and hopelessness and bring healing to the world.

Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We remember in our prayers everyone affected mentally or physically by Covid-19. We pray for all NHS employees, key workers and all those involved with the rollout of the vaccines bringing hope to so many.

Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Look in your mercy upon the world you loved so much that you sent your Son to suffer and to die. Strengthen those who work to share the reconciliation won at such a cost upon the cross. Bring healing by the wounds of Christ to all who are weighed down by pain and injustice.

Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Help the lonely and the betrayed, the suffering and the dying, to find strength in the companionship of Jesus, and in his passion to know their salvation. Welcome into paradise all who have left this world in your friendship

_____ (add names).

According to your promises, bring them with all your saints to share in all the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection.

Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray to the Father through his Son who suffered on the cross for the world's redemption. Give to Christian people everywhere a deep longing to take up the cross and to understand its mysterious glory.

Merciful Father **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The Donkey

by G. K. Chesterton

When fishes flew and forests walked
And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born;

With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.