

***Journeying with Jesus in Holy Week***  
**GOOD FRIDAY 2pm – 3pm ~ 10<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

***With Jesus to the end*** John 18:1-end of 19.  
Isaiah 52:13-end of 53; Psalm 22:1-11; Hebrews 10:16-25;

**St George's Prayer**

*Our Father, as individuals and as a community may we come to know and love you more and more; may we feel your love and care through each other; may we be witnesses to Christ wherever we are, and by the power of your Holy Spirit, may we be attentive to you, to our neighbour and to your world.*

**The Gathering**

Almighty Father,  
look with mercy on this your family  
for which our Lord Jesus Christ was content to be betrayed  
and given up into the hands of sinners  
and to suffer death upon the cross;  
who is alive and glorified with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
All Amen.

**INTRODUCTION**

✠ ***A story where Jesus gave himself for us ... it is as if he said 'I did it' about all the wrong we have done ... and that makes me free!*** The story of Good Friday is a story for us all. It is a story of a God who loved the world so much that he gave his Son to die instead of us, he allowed his Son to give himself: John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. I do not think I would give my son or my daughter .... but God did .. because he loved me .. and you!*  
✠ You are of value, you are worth it .. God thinks so ... Christ loved you enough to die for you. .. he wants you to say thank you and say, 'Jesus, I will follow you.'  
✠ This service is normally held from 2pm – 3pm, the hour of Jesus' death. He was crucified at the third hour which is 9am, the sky went dark at the 6<sup>th</sup> hour, 12am, and at the ninth hour he died.

There are three elements to today's meditations as we accompany him in his final hour.

**The First is to reflect on an ancient hymn of Bishop Venantius Fortunatus who died in 609.**

The royal banners forward go,  
the cross shines forth in mystic glow;  
where he in flesh, our flesh who made,  
our sentence bore, our ransom paid.

O tree of glory, tree most fair,  
ordained those holy limbs to bear,  
how bright in purple robe it stood,  
the purple of a Saviour's blood!

There whilst he hung, his sacred side  
by soldier's spear was opened wide,  
to cleanse us in the precious flood  
of water mingled with his blood.

Upon its arms, like balance true,  
he weighed the price for sinners due,  
the price which none but he could pay,  
and spoiled the spoiler of his prey.

Fulfilled is now what David told  
in true prophetic song of old,  
how God the nations' King should be;  
for God is reigning from the tree.

To thee, eternal Three in One,  
let homage meet by all be done:  
as by the cross thou dost restore,  
so rule and guide us evermore.

**The Second is to reflect on the Stations of the Cross.** Two of the Stations of the Cross are from tradition, but the tradition is so old they may well be true.

### **1st Station: "Jesus is Condemned to Death."**

Jesus stands has already experienced being beaten and tortured. Now he is wrongfully condemned to punishment by death. His commitment to entering our lives completely begins its final steps. He has said "yes" to God and placed his life in God's hands. We follow him in this final surrender, and contemplate with reverence each place along the way, as he is broken and given for us.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

I look at Jesus, the crown of thorns, the blood, his clothes stuck to the wounds on his back. Pilate washes his hands of the whole affair. His hands are tied behind his back. This is *for me*. That I might be *free*. I make this journey with Jesus.

### **2nd Station: "Jesus Takes Up His Cross."**

Jesus is made to carry the cross on which he will die. What he must have felt as he first took it upon his shoulders? With each step he enters more deeply into our human experience. He walks in the path of human misery and suffering, and experiences its crushing weight.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

I contemplate the wood of that cross. I imagine how heavy it is. I reflect upon all it means that Jesus is carrying it. I look into his eyes. This is for me. I place myself with him in this journey, in its anguish, in his freedom and surrender, in the love that fills his heart. With sorrow and gratitude, moved by the power of his love, I continue the journey.

### **3rd Station: "Jesus Fall For the First Time."**

The weight is unbearable. Jesus falls under it. He lies on the ground and knows the experience of weakness beneath unfair burdens. He feels the powerlessness. He is pulled up and made to continue.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

I stare at the weakness in his eyes. I see the exhaustion. As I behold him there on the ground, being roughly pulled up, I know forever how profoundly he understands my fatigue and my defeats. This is for me. As I watch him stand again and gain an inner strength, I accept his love and express my thanks.

### **4th Station: "Jesus Meets His Mother."**

All his life, his mother had taught him the meaning of the words, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord." Now they look into each other's eyes. How pierced-through her heart must be! How pained he must be to see her tears! Now, her grace-filled smile blesses his mission and stirs his heart to its depth. Love and trust in God bind them together.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

As I watch them in this place along the way, I contemplate the mystery of love's power to give strength. She knows the sorrow in every mother's heart, who has lost a child to tragedy or violence. I look at the two of them very carefully, and long for such love and such peace. This is for me. Such incredible freedom. The availability of a servant.

### **5th Station: "Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross."**

Jesus is made to experience the poverty of not being able to carry his burden alone. He enters into the experience of all who must depend upon others to survive.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

I look into his face and contemplate his struggle, his weariness and fragility. I see how he looks at Simon, with utmost humility and gratitude. This is for me. So I feel anguish and gratitude. I express my thanks that he can continue this journey, that he knows my inability to carry my burden alone.

### **6th Station: "Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus."**

Jesus' journey is at times brutal. He has entered into the terrible experiences of rejection and injustice. He has been whipped and beaten. He encounters a compassionate, loving disciple who wipes the vulgar spit and mocking blood from his face. On her veil, she discovers the image of his face - his gift to her.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

What does the face of Jesus hold for me? What do I see, as I look deeply into his face? Can I embrace him, with his face so covered with his passion? This is for me. In wonder and awe, I behold his face now wiped clean, and see the depth of his suffering in solidarity with all flesh. I say what I can say, to express my gratitude.

### **7th Station: "Jesus Falls the Second Time."**

Even with help, Jesus stumbles and falls to the ground. In deep exhaustion he stares at the earth beneath him.

"Remember, you are dust and to dust you will return." He can feel the profound weakness of disability and disease and aging itself, there on his knees, under the weight of his cross.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

I contemplate Jesus brought very low. As I behold him there on the ground, I let my heart go out to him. I store up this image in my heart, knowing that, with this image of Jesus on the ground before me, I need never feel alone in my suffering. This is for me, so I express the feelings in my heart.

### **8th Station: "Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem."**

The women of Jerusalem, and their children, come out to comfort and thank him. They had seen his compassion and welcomed his words of healing and freedom. He had broken social and religious conventions to connect with them. Now they are here to support him. He feels their grief. He knows the mystery of facing the separation of death.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

I look at their faces. So full of love and gratitude, loss and fear. I contemplate what words might have passed between them. I reflect on his tender, compassionate, merciful love for me. I am with these women. This is for me.

### **9th Station: "Jesus Falls the Third Time."**

This last fall is devastating. Jesus can barely proceed to the end. He collapses under the weight of the cross. His executioners look at him as a broken man, pathetic. Summoning all this remaining strength, supported by his inner trust in God, he moves onto the cross.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

I pause to contemplate him there on the ground. The brokenness that makes me whole. The surrender that gives me life. I pause to experience and receive how completely he loves me. He is indeed completely poured out for me.

### **10th Station: "Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments."**

Part of the indignity is to be crucified naked. Jesus is completely stripped of any pride. The wounds on his back are torn open again. He experiences the vulnerability of the defenseless. As they stare at him, his eyes turn to heaven.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

I pause to watch the stripping. I contemplate all that is taken from him. And, how he faces his death with such nakedness. I reflect upon how much of himself he has revealed to me. Holding nothing back. As I look at him in his humility, I know that this is for me.

### **11th Station: "Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross."**

Huge nails are hammered through his hands and feet to fix him on the cross. As the cross is lifted up, the weight of his life hangs on those nails. Every time he struggles to pull himself up to breathe, his ability to cling to life slips away.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

I make myself watch the nails being driven through his flesh. And I watch his face. I contemplate the completeness of his entry into our lives. Can there be any pain or agony he would not understand? This is for me. Nailed to a cross to forever proclaim liberty to captives.

### **12th Station: "Jesus Dies on the Cross."**

Between two criminals, a mocking title above his head, Jesus surrenders his last breath.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

I stand there, at the foot of the cross, and behold our salvation. I carefully watch and listen to all that is said. And then, I experience the one who gives life, pass from life to death, for me. This is the hour to worship.

### **13th Station: "Jesus Is Taken Down From the Cross."**

What tender mourning! Jesus' lifeless body lies in his mother's arms. He has truly died. A profound sacrifice, complete.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

I behold this scene at the foot of the cross. I remember all his hands have touched, all who have been blessed by his warm embrace. I pause to let it soak in. He knows the mystery of death. He has fallen into God's hands. That I might love as I have been loved. I pour out my heart to the God of all mercies.

### **14th Station: "Jesus Is Placed in the Tomb."**

They take the body of Jesus to its resting place. The huge stone over the tomb is the final sign of the permanence of death. In this final act of surrender, who would have imagined this tomb would soon be empty or that Jesus would show himself alive to his disciples, or that they would recognize him in the breaking of bread? Oh, that our hearts might burn within us, as we realize how he had to suffer and die so as to enter into his glory, for us.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

I pause to contemplate this act of closure on his life. I stand for a moment outside this tomb. This final journey of his life has shown me the meaning of his gift of himself for me. This tomb represents every tomb I stand before with fear, in defeat, struggling to believe it could ever be empty. In the fullness of faith in the Risen One, given by his own Holy Spirit, I express my gratitude for this way of the cross. I ask Jesus, whose hands, feet and side still bear the signs of this journey, to grant me the graces I need to take up my cross to be a servant of his own mission.

## 15th Station: "The Resurrection."

**He is not here, he is risen!**

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your cross and your resurrection you have set us free!*

### The Third is to reflect on the Sayings on the Cross.

1. Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34)
2. I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43)
3. Dear woman, here is your son ..... Here is your mother (John 19:26,27)
- 4 I am thirsty (John 19:28)
- 5 *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* -- My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46)
- 6 Father, into your hands I commit my spirit (Luke 23:43)
- 7 It is finished (John 19:30)

### REFLECTION

✠ The Via Dolorosa is a journey of love

✠ Julian of Norwich 1373: *The subject of the Revelations is love - God's love for humankind shown in the Passion, suffering and death of Jesus Christ. This love creates all that exists, it sustains all and redeems all. It is unfailing even in times of sorrow or trial. It is a love plenteous beyond imagining: it is all powerful and all embracing. God's whole purpose is to bring all into the bliss of heaven. "All shall be well!" 'Would you know your Lord's meaning in this? Learn it well. Love was his meaning.' ... "that all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."*

### CLOSING

✠ What shall I give you, Lord, in return for all Your kindness? What about writing a closing poem or prayer on our response to the love of God?

Glory to You for Your love.

Glory to You for Your mercy.

Glory to You for Your patience.

Glory to You for forgiving us all our sins.

Glory to You for Your bonds.

Glory to You for receiving the cut of the lash.

Glory to You for accepting mockery.

Glory to You for Your crucifixion.

Glory to You for Your burial.

Glory to You for Your resurrection.

Glory to You who were taken up into heaven.

Glory to You who sit in great glory at the Father's right hand.

Glory to You whose will it is that the sinner should be saved through Your great mercy and compassion.

Ephraem of Syria (ca. 306-373)

*A NOTE: I have accrued resources over the years ... most of them have been adapted, but I recognise the richness of Christian tradition that lies behind this service and I give God thanks.*

