

Church of the Resurrection

Bryanston

Lenten Programme 2020

From Repentance to Renewal



HOLY WEEK

PALM SUNDAY 5 APRIL

Scripture: *Matthew 26: 14 - 27: 66*

Reflection

It would seem that our world almost encourages selfishness in these modern times. Many people think only of themselves and have little, if any time for anyone else. We put our needs before the needs others. Businesses are out to make a profit whatever the cost. Sometimes politicians only think of personal gain instead of thinking about what is best for the people they serve. Generally, people even take more than what they actually need. Today, as we enter into Holy Week, let us pay careful attention on how Jesus Christ emptied himself to demonstrate God's love for us.

When we celebrate the Holy Week's liturgies we should always remember God's love. Today we commemorate Christ's entry into Jerusalem for the completion of the Paschal Mystery which is a manifestation of God's overwhelming love for each one of us. Such love leaves no room for selfishness. This is the kind of love we are called to: a self-sacrificing love. We remember how Jesus, throughout his public ministry, showed love and compassion to the marginalised and the outcasts of the society.

The gospel, from the passion narrative of Matthew, tells us how Jesus accepted death on a cross. Jesus thought we were worthy of all that pain and suffering. He clearly teaches, us through his passion, that true love comes from emptying ourselves, which includes loving others just as we love ourselves. Jesus' love for everyone was a mirror of the love of the Father. Our world frowns on self-sacrificing love. This is the kind of love Jesus call us to. He still shows us the way to true love.

Practical Suggestion

Do you have habits which may be seen as selfish (no matter how small they are)? What can you so to avoid these habits? In what way is the cross a dismal failure in a worldly sense, but a victory for Jesus and us, his followers?

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, may this Holy Week transform my darkest moments and weakness as I surrender all to you. Teach me to love others with your unconditional love. Amen.



MONDAY 6 APRIL

Scripture: *Isaiah 42: 1-7*

Reflection

We are told that when we read the scriptures we should imagine that God is directing his Word to us we read. In reading today's scripture from the prophet Isaiah, his words resonate so clearly within us as God speaks to each of us;

*"I, the Lord, have called you to serve the cause of right;
I have taken you by the hand and formed you;
I have appointed you as a covenant of the people and the Light of the nations,
To open the eyes of the blind,
To free captives from prison,
And those who live in darkness from the dungeon."*

Notice that there action is required. God calls us to share His mission in the world He has created. He will fulfil His aim for us to serve with and for each other, and to bring His to everyone.

We are told that God "having us by the hand" and having "formed us," will guide us in our efforts to bring the good news of salvation to everyone. There are many who do not know or acknowledge God as our creator, who are blind to the fact that Jesus came to show us the truth that we can be "freed from prison" and move from the "darkness of the dungeon" into the light. The light of Jesus offers all of us a Renewal in our lives. During Lent we have been on the path to Repentance. This brings us to share in His mission which is to bring light into our lives and through us into the world.

We are not alone when we join Jesus on His mission; "The Lord is my light and my help; whom shall is fear?" (Psalm 26)

We will commemorate the passion and death of Jesus on Good Friday but, on Sunday, He will be resurrected. His light will shine brighter than ever within us as we Renew ourselves in His Life.

Practical Suggestion

Light a candle next to a crucifix each night during this Holy Week. Remember that through His death Jesus is the light shining in your life.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are my strength and salvation. Help me to know that you have called me to follow you, to understanding that I need not fear anything because are my light and my help. Strengthen me to do those things that You have called me to do, in your name. Amen.

TUESDAY 7 APRIL

Scripture

John 13: 21-33, 36-38

Reflection.

If someone you admire tells you that you have a long-standing friend who is spreading rumours about you and even warning people to be careful of you, you would most certainly want to know who that person is so that you could ask them why they have become so anti-you. You would probably put such an individual in their place and break off your friendship for good. This is the way people respond today. It appears to be the norm.

Interestingly this is not the way Jesus dealt with Judas. He refrained from mentioning his name openly and only hinted at what was really happening. Peter, who would later become the leader of the apostles, was very disturbed by this news and, through another apostle very close to Jesus, he asks his master for the name of the traitor, but Jesus isn't entirely clear in his response.

We wonder why it is that Jesus didn't clearly identify Judas as the traitor? There are two possible reasons. Firstly He did not want the apostles to unleash their anger on Judas. This applies to us as well. Jesus wants his followers to respond to betrayal in a very different way to that of the world in which we live. Some may remember the 'See, judge, act' method of the Young Christian Workers.

Secondly, Jesus leaves room for repentance. This option was available to Judas who chose otherwise. This option is always available to us as well. We have the opportunity to repent and to turn our lives around from whatever wrongs and sins we may have committed.

What God wants of us is always to ask for help, to place all our trust in Him by staying close to Him and following his ways. To do this we must read the scriptures (the gospels in particular), go to Mass regularly and to confession frequently. Life is the training ground for heaven and so it follows that it is up to us to work towards our own salvation.

Practical Suggestion

Do an examination of conscience and try to establish what kind of a prayerful relationship you have with God. Then pray for the courage and strength to be as compassionate and forgiving as he is. Finally, make a firm purpose of amendment as you commit yourself to doing better in the future.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, forgive my many sins especially those that hurt others. Help me to act faithfully towards the Church that you left to guide us. Help me to do only that which is right and to love my neighbour as you love me. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 8 APRIL

Scripture

Matthew 26: 14 - 25

Reflection

As we reflected yesterday, to be betrayed by someone close to us is quite devastating! What was Judas thinking in his misguided way? Whatever it was, his actions had consequences even he could not have imagined.

It is easy for us to sit in judgement of Judas and his misguided ways today. The reality is that our attitude towards our faith can sometimes be a betrayal as well. It wasn't just Judas who betrayed Jesus, Peter did the same, and most of the apostles kept their distance when Jesus was on trial, on the road to Calvary and while he hung upon the cross. Was that not a betrayal too?

The events of the next few days is a call to faithfulness for each of us, the followers of Jesus. We sing the hymn 'Were you there when they crucified my Lord?' but we need to ask ourselves, 'Where will I be?'

Holy Week, and the Sacred Triduum in particular, is a real challenge for all of us this year. It is not possible for us to attend the Mass of the Lord's Supper tomorrow, to pray at the Altar of Repose, to Venerate the Cross on Good Friday afternoon and to experience the power of the Church's Sacred Liturgy at the Easter Vigil. We shouldn't think that just because we can't go to church the Triduum has been cancelled. Our loyalty and faithfulness to Jesus, which the apostles lacked at a crucial time, will be demonstrated in the way we choose to observe the Sacred Triduum at home.

Our Lenten Season has been seriously disrupted and some have forgotten that it is Lent! That you are reading this reflection means that you have not forgotten. In a variety of ways the Church will still guide you through the events of the passion, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Like us, Judas had a choice, even to the very last moment when Jesus told the apostles that one of them was going to betray him. His response was 'Not I, Rabbi, surely.' 'They are your own words' Jesus answered. That was his opportunity.

Practical Suggestion

Plan today how you (and your family) are going to observe the Sacred Triduum. You have been provided with material and resources to use at home. Don't miss this opportunity.

Prayer

Lord Jesus give me the strength to be a faithful follower, to walk with you through the darkness of the cross to the light and new life you offer at Easter. Amen.

HOLY THURSDAY 9 APRIL

Scripture

John 13: 1 – 15

"If I then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet"

Reflection

How often do we make an issue about our dignity not being respected or acknowledged? We may not always make this a public issue, but nevertheless, we feel slighted because we were not recognised as being important, not given pride of place, or precedence. We go away, hurt and perhaps angry.

The task of washing the feet of guests entering a house in the time of Jesus was given to the lowest slave. In the house where the Passover was being celebrated by Jesus and the apostles, there was no such servant, and the apostles were so busy arguing about which of them was 'the greatest', that not one of them would have stooped to do this menial task!

Jesus did what none of them was prepared to do. If anyone was able to 'stand on his dignity' it was Jesus, Lord of all, and yet He lovingly washed the feet of His disciples. The lesson was that there was only one form of greatness to be embraced, and that is the greatness of service to others. Jesus gives us this model and, if we truly love Him, then we too will offer ourselves to others in acts of simple service, putting aside our pride and dignity in the process! By doing this, we will help others to know the love that is showered upon us by Him who is LOVE!

It is not without significance that it was here, at what we now refer to as the Last Supper, that Jesus instituted the Sacraments of Eucharist and Holy Orders. In doing this Jesus demonstrates by his own example that both the Holy Eucharist and Holy Orders are about service. While, sadly, we are not able to receive Holy Communion today, we need to realise, accept and commit ourselves to making our reception of Holy Communion an act of willingness to serve one another.

Practical suggestion

In addition to the Last Supper, tonight also commemorates the arrest of Jesus and his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Spend at least 10 minutes tonight in silent prayer. Imagine yourself with Jesus at Gethsemane. Ask for the gifts of loyalty, faithfulness and humble service.

Prayer

Jesus, lead me in Your way of service and love, and let me do it without thought of self. Amen.



GOOD FRIDAY 10 APRIL

Scripture: *John 18: 1 - 19: 42*

Reflection

For the apostles, disciples and Mary this was a bad Friday. It is only with Christian hindsight that we can confidently call it a 'Good Friday'.

Jesus the Christ, Our Lord, Redeemer, Saviour, true God and true Man, enters into His passion with a full revelation of His absolute and full humanity and of His absolute Divinity. His nature was truly Divine.

As He is taken from the Garden in the early hours of the morning, then later to the palaces of Annas and Caiaphas, then to the praetorium of Pontius Pilate, sent to Herod and back to Pilate and then to endure horrific torture, His humanity was completely and totally tested. As a man like us, He was utterly exhausted, had lost a lot of blood and would have lost consciousness on more than one occasion. It is difficult for us to imagine such suffering.

In his book 'This Tremendous Lover' Eugene Boylan alludes to Jesus using His Divinity to keep himself humanly conscious (end of allusion). He does so in order to fully experience the maximum pain possible but, more importantly, to experience the utter inner joy of doing the will of the Father. He pays the ultimate sacrifice to reconcile us to God and to destroy the power of death because of our sinfulness.

This sacrifice was not just the physical suffering. Throughout His life, He had prayed to His Father, called upon His Father in everything He did, remained One with His Father. At the moment of His death, it seems that His Father has abandoned Him. That He felt the absence of the Father was more horrific and more dark than all the other punishments and human abandonments combined. Yet we know that he was neither abandoned nor God-forsaken. The Father was there on the cross sharing Golgotha with His Son.

Practical suggestion

Today we would have been able to walk the Stations of the Cross with Jesus in the morning and Venerate the Cross in the afternoon. Spend some quiet time today and meditate on the crucifix. It would be useful to have a crucifix in front of you. As you contemplate the cruel death of Jesus see in the crucifix the Father sharing his Son's passion.

Prayer

Most loving Father, thank you that we never have to experience being abandoned by You. Today we realise that you are always with us, even in our suffering, darkness and pain. It was and is indeed a very Good Friday. Amen.

HOLY SATURDAY 11 APRIL

Scripture: *Matthew 28: 1 - 10*

Reflection

Today we sit in quiet reflection as we recall the violence and horror of the events of Good Friday. That Sabbath must have been a very sombre day for Jesus' disciples. They would have been completely shaken by the previous day's happenings, trying to make sense of it all. We are told that two of the women went off to the tomb at daybreak. On the way they experienced a frightful earthquake and the appearance of angels. We are told the soldiers guarding the tomb were petrified but the angels explained to the women that Jesus had risen just as He had promised He would.

The Triduum services are incredibly powerful but the pinnacle must certainly be Holy Saturday night when we put behind us the symbols of repentance and celebrate our new birth through the symbols of fire, light and water as we proclaim with joy the resurrection of Jesus and the promises He made at the Last Supper.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house there are many places to live in; otherwise I would have told you. I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. You know the way to the place where I am going." John 14: 1 - 4

"I shall not leave you orphans; I shall come to you. In a short time the world will no longer see me; but you will see that I live and you also will live." John 14: 18 -19

"Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me say: I am going away and shall return. If you loved me you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you this now, before it happens, so that when it does happen you may believe."

John 14: 27 - 29

Practical Suggestion:

In the stillness and quietness of today Read John Chapter 14: 1 - 7 and make Jesus' words a lived reality in your life.

Prayer:

Father, thank you for the gift of your risen and glorified Son. Thank you that by His death and resurrection He has made it possible for me to have eternal life and to live with Him for ever and ever. Amen

These Daily Reflections for Lent 2020 were written by Fr. Wandile Cagwe, Deacon Mark Wardell, Lawrence Surgeson, Fr. Desmond Nair, Irene Helsdon, George Cominos, and Veronica Donnelly. Please acknowledge the authors when copying and distributing. We wish you a fruitful and blessed Holy Week and Easter.