

DAY 15: GOOD FRIDAY - CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Opening Prayer

Almighty Father

hear our prayer

and look with mercy on us your family
for which our Lord Jesus Christ
was ready to be betrayed
into the hands of sinners
and to suffer death on the cross;
who is alive, and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 52:13—53:12; Psalm 22; Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9; John 18:1—19:42

Reflection: This celebration traditionally takes place in the mid-afternoon as this corresponds to the time when Jesus arrived at Calvary to be crucified. The Service begins with a silent procession to the sanctuary – the silence reminding us of the importance of the solemnity of the moment. The prophet Isaiah in our first reading speaks of the Suffering Servant, of the one who died for our sake. It gives an account of the terrible suffering he underwent and the fact that it was our sins which caused that suffering, a suffering that was borne in silence. For this act of selflessness, the servant will bring salvation to many who will come to believe in him. Psalm 22 is normally read at the end of the Maundy Thursday Service during the Stripping of the Altar and it speaks of the God forsakenness of the moment. The stripping of the altar is symbolic of how Jesus was stripped of his humanity during his arrest, torture and crucifixion. This is a cry for the moment to pass, but also a song of praise to the Lord. The gospel of St John recalls the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. John's account focuses much more on the kingship of Jesus and sees the crucifixion of Jesus as the means of our salvation just as the Israelites in the wilderness were saved by the raising of the bronze serpent. In the encounter with Pilate, it is clear that Jesus is a king but not of the kind we are used to thinking of. In the episode in Pilate's courtyard, the Sanhedrin show their disloyalty to God by declaring that their king is Caesar rather than listening to what Jesus has to say. The raising of Jesus on the Cross is not a moment of failure for St John, but a moment of glory as Jesus is raised above all those who were against him and so becomes the means of defeating death. The crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ sums up for us what St John says in his gospel, chapter verse 16: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* Salvation has come to us through the love of a Father by sacrificing his beloved Son. Amen

Concluding Prayer

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out day by day but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One, you are the praise of Israel. In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed." Amen (Psalm 22:1-5)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all for ever. Amen