

## GOOD FRIDAY

As we reflect upon the accounts of Jesus' Passion, I offer the Collect for the day as a start:-

*Almighty Father, look with mercy on this your family  
for which our Lord Jesus Christ was content to be betrayed  
and given 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. Amen.*

In a few words it connects the selfgiving of Jesus and his suffering with, the trust in his Resurrection, but for now let's consider the events of the day. Early in the morning Jesus is brought before Pilate for trial and, under pressure from the religious establishment and the crowds who had turned against him since his entry into Jerusalem, hands him over for crucifixion. It was, if you, like politically expedient, even though Pilate found no fault in Jesus, the governor really didn't want trouble around the volatile Passover time.

Perhaps we feel we are living under pressures, limitations and state restraints that we do not like.

*Let us pray for those who have to make hard decisions at this time,  
that you will give them wisdom and compassion.  
But also for those who are finding these restrictions hard to live with.*

After brutal treatment, Jesus is forced to carry his cross to Golgotha, the place of the skull, but progress was slow and the soldiers forced a stranger, Simon of Cyrene to help carry the cross.

Today this has a strong resonance for us as we have to accept the help of strangers, medics, drivers, service providers.

*Let us pray for all those who are working for the good of us all,  
for the NHS, colleagues and emergency services,  
for all who keep our shops and essential services working.  
That God will keep them safe.*

As Jesus, isolated from all human contact, hangs on the cross, those he loves, his mother, the faithful disciple, the other Marys, remain at the foot of the cross. They weep, they support each other as they watch the slow ebbing of life from Jesus. They see and feel his pain, but can do nothing about it. Jesus cannot even feel a loving touch from his mother.

In these days of social isolation I find this particularly painful. We all know that those who die from the virus do so isolated from their family and friends, such is the fear of transmission and seriousness of the need to contain it. There can be no gentle loving farewell, no holding of hands.

*Let us bring before God's loving presence those  
who are in isolation in ICUs, hospitals or at home.  
We ask God to sustain them at this time.  
And we pray for the dying and their families  
that you will look on them in mercy.*

According to Matthew Jesus' last words are "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (ps 22) A heart rending cry of dereliction. At that moment, no matter how certain Jesus was

of his ministry and mission there was, deep in the heart of God a terrible loss. The Father loses his Son, and the Son a Father. But John tells it a bit differently, here Jesus' last words are "it is finished!" Some see this as a cry of victory, think for a moment of a marathon runner who crashes into the finish line, shouting "it's finished....I've done it!" This idea is reflected in the words of an ancient Latin hymn which starts like this:-

*Sing my tongue the glorious battle, sing the ending of the fray.  
O'er the cross, the victor's trophy, sound the loud triumphant lay:  
Tell how Christ, the world's Redeemer, as a victim won the day.*

Here we have no defeated martyr, or lost cause, instead we have the Redeemer who has accomplished what he came into the world to do, because he loves his creation, all of it. This brings us to the hope of Resurrection and of new life.

*Let us pray in expectant hope, scientists, doctors and others of dealing with  
this terrible pandemic, of finding effective treatments, and vaccines. And  
finally let us pray for all, across the world, that we may work together in  
peace and determination, trusting in God's infinite wisdom.*

May the love of Christ stay with you during these difficult and challenging times. Alice