

## **Readings and Reflections for Good Friday**

### **Prepared by Rev Ann Pickard**

#### **First Reading**

##### **Luke 22:31-34**

'Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.' And he said to him, 'Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!' Jesus said to him, 'I tell you, Peter, the cock will crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me.'

#### **Reflection**

Peter was convinced that he would be strong enough to undertake any challenge that came with following Jesus, even to death. Jesus knew that he was, but that the time for Peter to demonstrate that loyalty would be a while in coming. There was a lot of work for Peter to do before he faced death. Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. He knew restoration, leadership and loving service were all possible and with the strength of the Holy Spirit would be set free.

Peter did deny Jesus, as Jesus said that he would, but Jesus read his heart and he knew that Peter did truly love him, and although he was afraid, that he would come to a time of repenting; after which his loyalty would indeed be until death.

When we take people at face value, without reflecting deeper on why they say or act as they do, we do them and ourselves a disservice.

#### **Second Reading**

##### **Luke 23:13-16**

Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him.

#### **Reflection**

Pilate didn't want to kill Jesus; his wife warned him. Pilate's conviction was that Jesus did not deserve this punishment.

If he had stuck to his decision and released Jesus, history would be so very different. He could have released him, he held the power, instead Pilate is for ever known as the man who agreed to Christ's suffering. He agreed to something he knew was wrong, because of the crowd. There were so many of them, all shouting and jeering, and so he gave in; he was not strong enough to go against the majority. How many times have we kept silent, when we could have spoken up and saved someone else's suffering.

#### **Third Reading**

##### **Luke 23:32-35**

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one."

#### **Reflection**

There were two others crucified with Jesus, both of them were criminals. The one who who believed in him was redeemed, the one who scoffed was not. Jesus' love covers everyone who turns to him, even those of us who sometimes fail him. All the criminal on the cross had to do was to speak out his faith and belief and Jesus responded in love. Jesus' covering love surrounds all of us this way. Those who sin and repent, those who sin in ignorance; "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

A prayer of Brother Ramon:  
Lord Jesus, when I do not know what I am doing,  
Bring me to my senses,  
Let me affirm your suffering love  
And do your good and perfect will.

**Fourth Reading**  
**Luke 23:44-47**

It was now about noon, and the darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent."

Reflection

How can something so horrific be remembered as Good Friday? This is the truth we hang on to when all seems dark and hopeless. We, as Jesus did, can commend our spirit to our Heavenly Father in the sure knowledge that He is the hope that shines through any darkness. This is the covenant relationship of love and sacrifice that we celebrate as we come together for Communion.

This is my body given for you.

This is my blood shed for you.

Do this in remembrance of me.

The tears of sorrow we shed on Good Friday are mixed with the tears of joy that come on Easter Day.