

GOOD FRIDAY GOSPEL REFLECTION

Each evangelist views the passion of Christ through a different lens, as it were. St John is no exception.

Even though it is an instrument of torture and His sufferings are not minimalised, for St John, however, sees the Cross as a kind of victorious throne, an object of veneration. This is so because it is through the shedding of his blood that our sins are atoned for and Satan has been vanquished. Satan was wrong-footed because he thought that the cruelty and pain which he threw at Jesus in His passion, both physical and mental, would break him and he would turn on His Father and enemies in anger, but the exact opposite happened. He forgave everyone from the Cross even one of the thieves. And, if we only ask, he will forgive us too for the pain our sins inflicted on Him. He would even forgive Mr Karadzic for genocide but he's not humble enough to admit it.

In the fourth Gospel Jesus is conscious of his **pre-existence**. Through death, therefore, he is returning to a state he has temporarily left during his stay in this world. Jesus is **not seen as a victim at the mercy of his opponents** since he has freely chosen to lay down his life with the utter certitude that he will take it up again. Jesus freely goes to His execution. Satan has no power over Him. Jesus will not be caught off guard in the heat of the moment. Are we sometimes caught off guard when our faith is challenged?

In John Jesus is **not surprised by Judas** and the arresting party. He's actually expecting Him. Judas has already rejected Jesus, the Light of the world. When he left the room of the last Supper, 'night had fallen'. So, when he and the arresting party come to seize Jesus they are forced to use man-made artificial light - lanterns and torches, which are unreliable and can go out at any time. The Light which Jesus affords his followers and that includes you and me, will never go out unless we, like Judas, consciously extinguish it.

Jesus now comes before the Roman governor. It is **Pilate, not Jesus, who is on trial** to see whether he stands by the Truth or not. Pilate may think he has power over Jesus but he is calmly told that he has no such power 'unless it is given to him from above' (God). It is not Jesus who fears Pilate but the other way round. His wife even reminds him to be wary of this man. The real question is not what will happen to Jesus but whether **Pilate will betray himself** by bowing to the unjust demands of the

people he is supposed to govern. Have we ever buried the truth when it became uncomfortable to face or 'washed our hands' of tricky situations.

Jesus was crucified at noon and died at 3. It was roughly at this time that lambs were being slaughtered in the temple precincts for the Jewish Paschal meal that Friday evening which commemorates their delivery from the clutches of Pharaoh a thousand years before. By shedding His blood, Christ, delivers us from the clutches of our ancient enemy and offers us freedom.

St Andrew of Crete says:

- If there had been no Cross the record of our sins would not have been cancelled and Paradise, forfeited by our First Parents, would not have been re-gained. It would have remained shut to us forever.
- If there had been no Cross, death would not have been vanquished – our souls would also be lost forever.
- If there had been no the Cross the Prince of Darkness would still have supreme dominance over us.

That is why today is known as Good Friday.

'The tree of man's defeat become his tree of victory'