

## GOOD FRIDAY GOSPEL REFLECTION

The Passion account today is from St John. Each evangelist views the passion of Christ through a different lens, as it were, and lays emphasis on their own specific aspects of the story. Even though it is an instrument of torture and His sufferings are not minimalised, St John views the Cross as a kind throne where Jesus reigns victorious. For him the Cross is 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 hurled 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 his opponents from the Cross, entrusted his life into His Father's hands and even offered Paradise to the repentant thief. And, if we only ask, he will forgive us too for the pain our sins inflicted on Him.

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. We can sometimes be caught off guard when our faith is being tried and tested. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

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 cautions 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 thorny 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 commemorated 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 be lost forever.
- If there had been no Cross the Prince of Darkness would still have supreme dominance over man.
- But what happened on Good Friday changes all that.  
*'The tree of man's defeat becomes his tree of victory'*