

GOOD FRIDAY

7 APRIL 2024

CAVES BEACH

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERVICE

The service today is based on the Passion of Christ as he moves to the Cross – a devotion that was developed in the Middle Ages by the Franciscans as a way of allowing people who could not travel to the Holy Land to walk where Christ walked on the day of his passion.

By the end of the 17th century many churches had stations, or stops, ranged at intervals along their walls - each with a cross and under that cross a representation of an event in the passion narrative. Nine of the fourteen stations are taken directly from scripture - the other five come out of the earliest traditions of the church.

This morning we want you to take a journey to the cross.

With the exception of the first hymn - please remain seated during the service. We will proceed after that hymn to move through the Stations of the Cross. Each station has a devotion and a prayer. Immediately after the prayer we ask you to sing the verse or verses of the hymns shown.

It is our prayer that you will relax - and enter into the experience of Christ's passion, that you may know the meaning of what our Lord has done for us. Let us start for our worship now by standing to sing "There is A Green Hill Far Away".

HYMN: TIS 350 There is a Green Hill Far Away (entire)

READING: John 18:1-19:16

After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. ² Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place because Jesus often met there with his disciples. ³ So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴ Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" ⁵ They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶ When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground. ⁷ Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these people go." ⁹ This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me." ¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. ¹¹ Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

¹² So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. ¹³ First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. ¹⁴ Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

¹⁵ Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, ¹⁶ but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. ¹⁷ The woman said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." ¹⁸ Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

¹⁹ Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. ²⁰ Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said." ²² When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" ²³ Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" ²⁴ Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

²⁵ Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." ²⁶ One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" ²⁷ Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

²⁸ Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. ²⁹ So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" ³⁰ They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." ³¹ Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The Jews replied, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death." ³² (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

³³ Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" ³⁵ Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom belonged to this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." ³⁷ Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." ³⁸ Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no case against him. ³⁹ But you have a custom that I release someone for

you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" ⁴⁰ They shouted in reply, "Not this man but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a rebel.

¹⁹ Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. ³ They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. ⁴ Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." ⁵ So Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate^[9] said to them, "Behold the man!" ⁶ When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." ⁷ The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

⁸ Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. ⁹ He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you and power to crucify you?" ¹¹ Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." ¹² From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against Caesar."

¹³ When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. ¹⁴ Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover, and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" ¹⁵ They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." ¹⁶ Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

STATION ONE: Jesus is Condemned to Death.

It is Friday - early in the morning. Jesus is brought from Caiaphas the High Priest to Pontius Pilate, the Governor, on trumped-up charges of treason and is condemned to death.

The cries of, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" still ring in my ears. The picture of Pilate sitting on the judge's bench asking the crowd of leaders and people, "Shall I crucify your King?" and their response, "We have no king but the Emperor." is an image that haunts me. It haunts me because of the callousness and injustice of it all. The world is often so unjust. But mostly it haunts me because I see this injustice, this callousness sometimes in myself. Lord, when do I see you hungry, sick and helpless and do not reach out to you?

O, Lord Jesus, help us all to remember why you came to us and how we responded. Give us grace to reach out to you in love and justice.

SUNG RESPONSE Based on Hymn: "Were You There?" (TiS 345)

Were you there when they judged the Son of God?

Were you there when they judged the Son of God?

O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;

Were you there when they judged the Son of God?

STATION TWO: Jesus Accepts His Cross.

A heavy cross is thrust into Jesus' arms. He is ordered to carry it to the site of His execution. Jesus accepts the cross. Carrying it by himself, he goes out to the Place of the Skull - Golgotha - to be crucified with two other men.

He went out carrying his cross. Humanity is burdened with many crosses - war, hunger and famine, greed and poverty, sickness and death. My neighbours bear their crosses. Some there are who mourn, some who struggle to survive financially, some who are in fear and loneliness. Jesus went out carrying his cross alone. He knows what it is like to carry a heavy burden.

Lord, you know how to carry a burden. Teach us how to bear each other's burdens and how to turn to you for grace and strength.

SUNG RESPONSE Based on Hymn: "Were You There?" (TiS 345)

Were you there when he took the Cross for you?

Were you there when he took the Cross for you?

O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;

Were you there when he took the Cross for you?

STATION THREE: Jesus Falls the First Time.

The cross is heavy and the road to Calvary, the road to Golgotha - the place of death - is long. Jesus, weary from lack of sleep, loneliness, fear, and the beatings he received, slumps to the ground. Soldiers quickly drag him to his feet again.

All around Jesus are the mockers and those who take delight in human misery. It is hot and sticky in the crowded little street. The air is filled with foreboding on this day of Preparation for Passover. These people should

have their hearts on pondering the things of their God. Instead they are bent, in God's name, to do this evil. The world is filled with people, it seems, who have fallen and struggle to rise and there are no hands, not even rough ones to help. Do I, too, mock him by my unthinking, uncaring gruffness?

Jesus, so much of our wickedness rises out of our selfishness and fear. So many bad things happen when we fail to honour you. Forgive us.

SUNG RESPONSE: TIS 339 O sacred head sore wounded V1

STATION FOUR: Jesus Meets His Mother.

In horror - stunned, numb - Mary watches. Her son, who glances at her in his agony, is being dragged off to his death.

The look on Mary's face. The anguish and the pain as she meets Jesus' eyes. The look that he flashes her. I could not tell what he said in that glance. Whatever it was she stood there in anguish. What mother would not feel the agony of Mary's helplessness and seeming loss? In a world filled with death and destruction from wars and earthquakes, from riots and terror to drought and starvation, have we lost the ability to comprehend and feel compassion in the face of tremendous loss?

Lord Jesus, help us to remember Mary your mother as she stood alone in grief. Help us to remember all the other Marys of this world when they suffer. May we be a true source of grace and comfort, comforted as we are, by you.

SUNG RESPONSE: TIS 339 V2

STATION FIVE: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross.

Jesus is faltering under the load. The soldiers fear that he might die along the way. They seize Simon of Cyrene, put the cross on his shoulders, too, as he stands behind Jesus and make him help shoulder the load.

A perfect stranger, coming into the city, just happens to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. He was grabbed and forced to take the cross. Was he reluctant? Was I? I longed to help Jesus, but I was afraid. I was relieved when they picked someone out of the crowd to help. I was ashamed that I could not bring myself to step out of character, out of my role to help the man.

Thank you God, for strangers in our midst, who often unwittingly show us what to do and how to do it. Open our eyes and hearts - enlarge our vision.

SUNG RESPONSE: TIS 339 V3

STATION SIX: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus.

As Jesus passes by, a woman - Veronica we call her - reaches out of the press of the crowd and lovingly, gently wipes the blood and the sweat from Jesus' face.

I am stunned. Even the crowd quiets for a moment. What she has done is so full of love and compassion and courage. There should be more like her on this earth. Are there? Anywhere? Lord?

Please help us Lord to share the crosses that others bear and to wipe away their tears.

SUNG RESPONSE: "O Love That Will Not Let Me Go" (TiS 602) vs 1-2

STATION SEVEN: Jesus Falls the Second Time.

Jesus falls again, despite the help of Simon. He lies sprawled in the dirt, sweat beading on his face, mingling with the blood from the cuts on his forehead and the dust of these well-travelled streets. The soldiers, impatient and anxious to be over this job, roughly drag him to his feet again, cursing him.

My heart wrenches. My stomach churns. I feel my own sweat upon my brow. I can only guess at his agony. The weight of the cross is too much and he is very weak. He is bearing a heavy burden like so many others in my society and has been forced once again to his knees - like them. How do they feel as they watch this? Did they recognize their own pain? Did they try to hide that pain by laughing at it, like me? Did they reject that pain by jeering at him, like me?

Lord, we have offended greatly. We have shrugged off the burdens of others so carelessly. Forgive us!

SUNG RESPONSE: TIS 601 O Master let me walk with thee Vs 1-2

STATION EIGHT: Jesus Speaks to the Weeping Women.

A large crowd of women have followed Jesus' path to Golgotha. They are weeping and wailing in traditional mourning for this man, their friend. They are overcome by their grief and by their helplessness. Jesus says to them, "Don't weep for me but for yourselves and your children." Your tears are not enough.

They cry, these women, like I am crying inside. But our tears are not enough. They cannot stop the agony. They cannot feed the hungry. They cannot bring peace. "If you must weep," he says, "weep for your own pitifulness and lack."

There is another way. I know it in my heart. We must move beyond the weeping. We must also act. But I cannot. Help us Lord in our tears to remember that we must also act.

SUNG RESPONSE TIS 601 Vs 3-4

STATION NINE: Jesus Falls the Third Time.

No sleep, nothing to eat or drink since supper the evening before, the interrogations, the scourging, the mockery - they have all taken their toll. Jesus falls again to the dust and grime of the crowded street of Jerusalem amidst the noise of weeping and heckling.

This is almost too much. How much more will he, will "we", have to endure? Jesus has become a spectacle. The laughter as he struggles once more to his feet is awful. How can they laugh? Can't they see he's

trying? Don't they feel any pity? I should talk. My patience is wearing thin to get this over with and go home. At least I can go home. This poor creature won't.

O Lord, you have put up with so much from us. How great your despair must have been that day. Teach us Lord from your example to not add to the pain of this world.

SUNG RESPONSE TIS 342 When I survey ... V1

STATION TEN: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments.

Finally, they arrive at the God-forsaken place where he will be crucified. People dump their garbage here. Hurriedly, roughly, his clothes are stripped from his back leaving him naked in front of the crowd - naked, exhausted and humiliated.

Stripped naked. Nothing left, not even dignity. Is this His poverty or is it ours? We took His clothes, we took His dignity much like this world strips naked hundreds and thousands of its people every day with its greed and its uncaring. Our selfishness stands exposed for what it is when we stripped Jesus naked.

Dear Lord, we reach out and grasp greedily for so much, searching for what will satisfy. We do not know how to let go of things and let you in. Help us to choose what will bring healing and wholeness.

SUNG RESPONSE: TIS 342 V2

STATION ELEVEN: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross. Roughly, contemptuously, the soldiers thrust Jesus down onto his cross. Holding him down - some sit on him - they pound the nails through his hands and feet. After he is lifted up, the soldiers throw dice for his clothing to fulfil the scripture, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots."

The ring of the hammer on the nails, the sickening sound of flesh and bone crunching echo in my brain. I'll never, never ever forget this. Somehow this one crucifixion is different to all the others I've been to. The torture, for that's what it was, has not stopped. It still happens every day. From utter brutality to the unkind word that flays the soul - it still happens. But the nonchalance, the ease with which the soldiers threw the dice beneath his feet as if nothing were happening horrifies me today. I know - I was there. I threw the dice with the rest.

O God, our God, we have forsaken thee, fled from the crosses you ask us to bear, turned to endless games and things to numb our pain. That day you did not flee. Help us to turn to you, to embrace you and the yoke you have offered us.

SUNG RESPONSE: TIS 342 V3

STATION TWELVE: Jesus Dies on the Cross.

The nightmare of pain and suffering, the agony of betrayal and loneliness come to an end. Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her and he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother."

The thief on the cross beside him cries out, "Remember me, O Lord, when you come to your kingdom." After three mercifully brief hours on the cross, suspended between earth and sky, Jesus dies. Choking on the hyssop dipped in wine he gasps out the words, "It is finished." He bows his head and gives up his spirit.

I watched. I heard the words he spoke. I saw his agony. I felt the spear dig in his flesh. I saw the blood and water pour out down his side, down his thighs to the ground. Violence and death. I hung my head. I could no longer see for the tears that flowed, like his blood, down my face. I could not stop the words, "Truly this man was God's Son!" I felt overcome. Why did I have a hand in this? How have I let it happen?

Psalm 22 says: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death." (Psalm 22:1, 3, 14-15)

SUNG RESPONSE: TIS 342 V4

STATION THIRTEEN: Jesus is Taken Down From the Cross.

He is dead. His body hangs limply, heavily. The darkness which had filled the sky since noon begins to fade. A wild rumour that the curtain of the temple had been torn in two from top to bottom was circulating. The soldiers yank out the nails to get him down. Everyone, including the women who had followed him and were looking on from a distance, stands back awkwardly, and watches the scene before them. Bleeding, broken, limp and heavy in his death - they place him in the arms of his mother.

How did she feel? How did she feel? Mary, the mother of Jesus, how did she feel? With infinite tenderness, she gently held him and wiped his bloodied brow as her tears fell on his lifeless body. How did she feel? She shoos away the hands that would have parted her from her son. "Just one more moment," she whispers. How did she feel?

Psalm 142 says: "I cry to you, O Lord; I say, 'You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.' Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low."
(Psalm 142:5-6)

SUNG RESPONSE: "Rock of Ages" (TiS 222)v1

STATION FOURTEEN: The Burial of Jesus.

Relatives and friends carry his body to the gravesite - to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man who was also a disciple of Jesus. They lay his body gently in the new tomb carved out of the hill, wrapped in a clean linen cloth. They roll a boulder across the entrance and silently withdraw.

The place of the tomb was in a garden. This garden seemed strangely silent and still as I stole into it to watch them. My mind and my body were in shock. Images registered on my brain but I felt nothing. It was over. The crucifixion was over. This Jesus had died. But my life would never be the same. He was gone. Gone. And I did not know him. I went away and wept bitterly.

Romans says: "God did not withhold nor spare even his own Son, but gave him up for all of us." (Romans 8:32) Then some verses fro John's Gospel: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments....Where I am going you cannot come. I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.

Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know you are my disciples..." (John 14:15 & John 13:33-35)

SUNG RESPONSE: "Were You There?" (TiS 345) v5

DEPARTING PRAYER

Lord, when you were buried it seemed like the end of everything you promised and stood for. But it wasn't, it was only the beginning. As we travel today from the Crucifixion through the Vigil of Easter to the Resurrection, be with us in a special way to help us recall and reflect in our hearts who you are and what you have done for us.

Father, send down your abundant blessing upon your people who have lovingly recalled the death of your Son. Grant them pardon and bring them comfort. May their faith grow stronger and their eternal salvation be assured. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

ALL DEPART IN SILENCE