

GOOD FRIDAY
LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading:

A Reading from the Prophet Isaiah

52: 13 – 53: 12

See, my servant will prosper,
he shall be lifted up, exalted, rise to great heights.
As the crowds were appalled on seeing him
-so disfigured did he look
that he seemed no longer human so
will the crowds be astonished at him,
and kings stand speechless before him;
for they shall see something never told
and witness something never heard before:
"Who could believe what we have heard,
and to whom has the power of Yahweh been revealed?"
Like a sapling he grew up in front of us,
like a root in arid ground.
Without beauty, without majesty (we saw him),
no looks to attract our eyes;
a thing despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering,
a man to make people screen their faces;
he was despised and we took no account of him.
And yet ours were the sufferings he bore,
ours the sorrows he carried.
But we, we thought of him as someone punished,
struck by God, and brought low.
Yet he was pierced through for our faults,
crushed for our sins.
On him lies a punishment that brings us peace,
and through his wounds we are healed.
We had all gone astray like sheep,
each taking his own way,
and Yahweh burdened him
with the sins of all of us.
Harshly dealt with, he bore it humbly,
he never opened his mouth,
like a lamb that is led to the slaughterhouse,
like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers
never opening its mouth.
By force and by law he was taken;
would anyone plead his cause?
Yes, he was torn away from the land of the living;
for our faults struck down in death.
They gave him a grave with the wicked,
a tomb with the rich,
though he had done no wrong

and there had been no perjury in his mouth.
Yahweh has been pleased to crush him with suffering.
If he offers his life in atonement,
he shall see his heirs, he shall have a long life
and through him what Yahweh wishes will be done.
His soul's anguish over
he shall see the light and be content.
By his sufferings shall my servant justify many,
taking their faults on himself.
Hence I will grant whole hordes for his tribute,
he shall divide the spoil with the mighty,
for surrendering himself to death
and letting himself be taken for a sinner,
while he was bearing the faults of many
and praying all the time for sinners.
The word of the Lord.

Psalm

Ps. 30:2.6. 12-13. 15-17. 25. R/. Lk 23:46

R/. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit

In you, O Lord, I take refuge.
Let me never be put to shame.
In your justice, set me free.
Into your hands I commend my spirit.
It is you who will redeem me, Lord R/.

In the face of all my foes
I am a reproach,
an object of scorn to my neighbours
and of fear to my friends. R/.

Those who see me in the street
run far away from me.
I am like the dead, forgotten by all,
like a thing thrown away. R/.

But as for me, I trust in you, Lord,
I say: 'You are my God.'
My life is in your hands, deliver me
from the hands of those who hate me. R/.

Let your face shine on your servant.
Save me in your love.
Be strong, let your heart take courage,
all who hope in the Lord. R/.

Since in Jesus, the Son of God, we have the supreme high priest who has gone through to the highest heaven, we must never let go of the faith that we have professed. For it is not as if we had a high priest who was incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us; but we have one who has been tempted in every way that we are, though he is without sin. Let us be confident, then, in approaching the throne of grace, that we shall have mercy from him and find grace when we are in need of help.

During his life on earth, he offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had the power to save him out of death, and he submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard. Although he was Son, he learned to obey through suffering; but having been made perfect, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation.

The word of the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation

Phil 2: 8-9

Glory and praise to you, O Christ!
 Christ was humbler yet,
 even to accepting death, death on a Cross.
 But God raised him high
 and gave him the name which is above all names.
 Glory and praise to you, O Christ!

THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO JOHN

R/. Glory to you, Lord

Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kedron valley. There was a garden there, and he went into it with his disciples. Judas the traitor knew the place well, since Jesus had often met his disciples there, and he brought the cohort to this place together with a detachment of guards sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees, all with lanterns and torches and weapons. Knowing everything that was going to happen to him, Jesus then came forward and said, 'Who are you looking for?' They answered, '**JESUS THE NAZARENE.**' He said, 'I am he.'

Now Judas the traitor was standing among them. When Jesus said, 'I am he', they moved back and fell to the ground. He asked them a second time, 'Who are you looking for?' They said, '**JESUS THE NAZARENE.**' Jesus replied, 'I have told you that I am he. If I am the one you are looking for, let these others go.' This was to fulfil the words he had spoken, 'Not one of those you gave me have I lost.' Simon Peter, who carried a sword, drew it and wounded the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword back in its scabbard; am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?'

The cohort and its captain and the Jewish guards seized Jesus and bound him. They took him first to Annas, because Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had suggested to the Jews, 'It is better for one man to die for the people.'

Simon Peter, with another disciple, followed Jesus. This disciple, who was known to the high priest, went with Jesus into the high priest's palace, but Peter stayed outside the door. So the other disciple, the one known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who was keeping the door and brought Peter in. The maid on duty at the door said to Peter, 'Aren't you another of that man's disciples?' He answered, 'I am not.' Now it was cold, and the servants and guards had lit a charcoal fire and were standing there warming themselves; so Peter stood there too, warming himself with the others. The high priest

questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered, 'I have spoken openly for all the world to hear; I have always taught in the synagogue and in the Temple where all the Jews meet together: I have said nothing in secret. But why ask me? Ask my hearers what I taught; they know what I said.' At these words, one of the guards standing by gave Jesus a slap in the face, saying, 'Is that the way to answer the high priest?' Jesus replied, 'If there is something wrong in what I said, point it out; but if there is no offence in it, why do you strike me?' Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest. As Simon Peter stood there warming himself, someone said to him, 'Aren't you another of his disciples?' He denied it saying, 'I am not.' One of the high priest's servants, a relation of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said, 'Didn't I see you in the garden with him?' Again Peter denied it; and at once a cock crew. They then led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the Praetorium. It was now morning. They did not go into the Praetorium themselves or they would be defiled and unable to eat the Passover. So Pilate came outside to them and said, 'What charge do you bring against this man?' They replied, **'IF HE WERE NOT A CRIMINAL, WE SHOULD NOT BE HANDING HIM OVER TO YOU.'** Pilate said, 'Take him yourselves, and try him by your own Law.' The Jews answered, **'WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO PUT A MAN TO DEATH.'** This was to fulfil the words Jesus had spoken indicating the way he was going to die. So Pilate went back into the Praetorium and called Jesus to him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' he asked. Jesus replied, 'Do you ask this of your own accord, or have others spoken to you about me?' Pilate answered, 'Am I a Jew? It is your own people and the chief priests who have handed you over to me: what have you done?' Jesus replied, 'Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought to prevent my being surrendered to the Jews. But my kingdom is not of this kind.' Pilate said, 'So you are a king then?' Jesus answered, 'It is you who say it. Yes, I am a king. I was born for this, I came into the world for this; to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice.' Pilate said, 'Truth? What is that?' and with that he went out again to the Jews and said, 'I find no case against him. But according to a custom of yours I should release one prisoner at the Passover; would you like me, then, to release the king of the Jews?' At this they shouted: **'NOT THIS MAN, BUT BARABBAS.'** Barabbas was a brigand. Pilate then had Jesus taken away and scourged; and after this, the soldiers twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on his head, and dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him and saying, **'HAIL, KING OF THE JEWS!'** and they slapped him in the face. Pilate came outside again and said to them, 'Look, I am going to bring him out to you to let you see that I find no case.' Jesus then came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said, 'Here is the man.' When they saw him the chief priests and the guards shouted, **'CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM!'**

Pilate said, 'Take him yourselves and crucify him: I can find no case against him.' The Jews replied **'WE HAVE A LAW, AND ACCORDING TO THE LAW HE OUGHT TO DIE, BECAUSE HE CLAIMED TO BE THE SON OF GOD.'** When Pilate heard them say this his fears increased. Re-entering the Praetorium, he said to Jesus,

'Where do you come from?' But Jesus made no answer. Pilate then said to him, 'Are you refusing to speak to me? Surely you know I have power to release you and I have power to crucify you?' Jesus replied, 'You would have no power over me if it had not been given you from above; that is why the one who handed me over to you has the greater guilt.' From that moment Pilate was anxious to set him free, but the Jews shouted **'IF YOU SET HIM FREE YOU ARE NO FRIEND OF CAESAR'S; ANYONE WHO MAKES HIMSELF KING IS DEFYING CAESAR.'**

Hearing these words, Pilate had Jesus brought out, and seated himself on the chair of judgement at a place called the Pavement, in Hebrew Gabbatha. It was Passover Preparation Day, about the sixth hour. Pilate said to the Jews, 'Here is your king.' They said, **'TAKE HIM AWAY, TAKE HIM AWAY! CRUCIFY HIM!'** Pilate said, 'Do you want me to crucify your king?' The chief priests answered, **'WE HAVE NO KING EXCEPT CAESAR.'** So in the end Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. They then took charge of Jesus, and carrying his own cross he went out of the city to the place of the skull or, as it was called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified him with two others, one on either side with Jesus in the middle. Pilate

wrote out a notice and had it fixed to the cross; it ran: 'Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews.' This notice was read by many of the Jews, because the place where Jesus was crucified was not far from the city, and the writing was in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. So the Jewish chief priests said to Pilate,

'YOU SHOULD NOT WRITE "KING OF THE JEWS" BUT "THIS MAN SAID: I AM KING OF THE JEWS".' Pilate answered, 'What I have written, I have written.' When the soldiers had finished crucifying Jesus they took his clothing and divided it into four shares, one for each soldier. His undergarment was seamless, woven in one piece from neck to hem; so they said to one another, **'INSTEAD OF TEARING IT, LET'S THROW DICE TO DECIDE WHO IS TO HAVE IT.'**

In this way the words of scripture were fulfilled: They shared out my clothing among them. They cast lots for my clothes. This is exactly what the soldiers did. Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son.' Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother.' And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home. After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed, and to fulfil the scripture perfectly he said: 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of vinegar stood there, so putting a sponge soaked in the vinegar on a hyssop stick they held it up to his mouth. After Jesus had taken the vinegar he said, 'It is accomplished'; and bowing his head he gave up the spirit.

All kneel and pause a moment.

It was Preparation Day, and to prevent the bodies remaining on the cross during the Sabbath since that Sabbath was a day of special solemnity - the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken away.

Consequently the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with him and then of the other. When they came to Jesus, they found he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water. This is the evidence of one who saw it - trustworthy evidence, and he knows he speaks the truth - and he gives it so that you may believe as well. Because all this happened to fulfil the words of scripture: Not one bone of his will be broken, and again, in another place scripture says - They will look on the one whom they have pierced.

After this, Joseph of Arimathaea, who was a disciple of Jesus - though a secret one because he was afraid of the Jews - asked Pilate to let him remove the body of Jesus. Pilate gave permission, so they came and took it away. Nicodemus came as well - the same one who had first come to Jesus at nighttime - and he brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds.

They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, following the Jewish burial custom. At the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in this garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been buried. Since it was the Jewish Day of Preparation and the tomb was near at hand, they laid Jesus there.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

1) For the Church throughout the world

(Reader) Let us pray, dear friends, for the holy Church of God throughout the world, that God will guide it and gather it together, so that we may worship the Father in tranquility and peace.

(Let us kneel)

All pray in silence.

(Let us stand)

(Deacon 1)

Almighty and eternal God, in Christ your Son you revealed your glory to nation upon nation. Safeguard the great work of your mercy, that your Church throughout the world may persevere with unshakable faith in confessing your holy name. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

2) For the Pope

(Reader) Let us pray also for our Holy Father, Pope Francis, that God, who has chosen him for the office of bishop, will keep him in health and strength for the sake of the Church to guide and govern the holy people of God.

(Let us kneel)

All pray in silence.

(Let us stand)

(Deacon 2)

Almighty and eternal God, whose wisdom orders all things, protect with your love the shepherd you have chosen, that the Christian people you entrust to his care may under his leadership grow in faith. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

3) For the ministers and people of the Church

(Reader) Let us pray also for Philip, our bishop,
for all bishops, priests, and deacons,
and for all God's holy people.

(Let us kneel)

All pray in silence.

(Let us stand)

(Deacon 1)
Almighty and eternal God,
by whose Spirit the Church is ruled and made holy,
hear the prayers we offer
for those you have called to ministry
and for your entire people,
that by your grace we may all serve you faithfully.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

4) For those preparing for baptism

(Reader) Let us pray also for those preparing for baptism,
that God will open their ears and their hearts
and unlock for them the gates of divine mercy,
so that through the waters of rebirth
they may receive pardon for their sins
and find new life in Christ Jesus.

(Let us kneel)

All pray in silence.

(Let us stand)

(Deacon 2)
Almighty and eternal God,
by whom the Church is continually blessed with new members,
deepen the faith and understanding of all catechumens,
that, being reborn in the font of baptism,
they may take their place among your adopted children.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

5) For the unity of Christians

(Reader) Let us pray also for those who share our faith in Jesus Christ,
that God will gather together and keep in one Church
all who seek to live by the truth.

(Let us kneel)

All pray in silence.

(Let us stand)

(Deacon 1)

Almighty and eternal God,
by whom the dispersed are gathered
and kept together as one,
look lovingly on the flock of your Son,
that all who have been sealed by one baptism
may be joined together by wholeness of faith
and preserved in fellowship by the bond of love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

6) For the Jewish people

(Reader) Let us pray also for the Jewish people,
the first to hear the word of God,
that they will grow in the love of God's name
and in faithfulness to the covenant.

(Let us kneel)

All pray in silence.

(Let us stand)

(Deacon 2)

Almighty and eternal God,
who long ago chose Abraham and his descendants
and established them as children of the promise,
hear the prayers of your Church,
that the people you first made your own
may arrive at the fullness of redemption.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

7) For those who do not share our faith in Christ

(Reader) Let us pray also for those
who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ,
that the light of the Holy Spirit
will guide them toward the path of salvation.

(Let us kneel)

All pray in silence.

(Let us stand)

(Deacon 1)
Almighty and eternal God,
grant that those who do not believe in Christ,
but who walk before you in sincerity of heart,
may find the fullness of truth.
Make our love for each other grow
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of salvation,
that we may bear before the world
a more perfect witness to your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

8) For those who do not believe in God

(Reader) Let us pray also for those who do not believe in God,
that they will come to a knowledge of God
through their wholehearted seeking of all that is right.

(Let us kneel)

All pray in silence.

(Let us stand)

(Deacon 2)
Almighty and eternal God,
you implanted in the human heart
such a deep longing for yourself
that only in you can peace be found.
Grant that, despite the obstacles which stand in the way,
all may recognize the signs of your goodness,
discern the holiness of your people,
and so gladly acknowledge you
as the one true God and Father of us all.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

9) For those who serve in public office

(Reader) Let us pray also for those who serve in public office,
that God will direct their minds and hearts
in accordance with his will
to ensure true peace and freedom.

(Let us kneel)

All pray in silence.

(Let us stand)

(Deacon 1)
Almighty and eternal God,
whose hand upholds the rights and aspirations of all,
guide those in authority,
that people everywhere on earth
may enjoy prosperity, freedom of worship,
and the security of peace.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

10) For all those in need

(Reader) Finally, dear friends, let us pray that God
will rid the world of falsehood and error,
dispel disease and famine from the face of the earth,
break the fetters of the oppressed,
grant safe passage to travellers and those far from home,
restore health to the sick,
and give salvation to the dying.

(Let us kneel)

All pray in silence.

(Let us stand)

(Deacon 2)
Almighty and eternal God,
comfort of the afflicted and strength of the weary,
hear the voices of those who cry to you in distress
and grant that all may rejoice,
because your mercy attended them in their hour of need.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE FOLLY OF GOD

(see the slides in Powerpoint)

The Journey of the Cross – A Path to Light

Leader: We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

(This is repeated for each station)

1) **SURRENDER** *Scripture – Meditation - Reflection*

Prayer: Jesus, you didn't hesitate to pay the price for our wrongdoing. Give us the courage to face the truth when we fail. Give us strength to be true to your gospel and to be true to our brothers and sisters.

Sung verse: *And when I think, that God, his Son not sparing, sent him to die, I scarce can take it in, that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing he bled and died to take away my sin. Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee, how great Thou art. How great Thou art. Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee, how great Thou art. How great Thou art.*

2) **EMBRACE** *Scripture – Meditation – Reflection*

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the mystery of your cross is at the heart of our lives. Help us embrace the world as you did. Give us the perseverance we need to make our world a better place. Your kingdom come, your will be done.

Sung verse: *Come, Lord Jesus, come. Come take my hands, take them for your work. Take them for your service Lord. Take them for your glory, Lord. Come, Lord Jesus come. Come, Lord Jesus take my hands.*

3) **CORNERSTONE** *Scripture – Meditation – Reflection*

Prayer: Jesus, you bore our sin so that we might live. You are the rock of our strength. Do not allow us to neglect those who are crushed by their own mistakes, those who feel rejected, the sinful.

Sung verse: *Father, I place into your hands that things that I can't do. Father, I place into your hands the falls that I've been through. Father, I place into your hands the way that I should go, for I know I always can trust you.*

4) **NO WORDS** *Scripture – Meditation – Reflection*

Prayer: Lord Jesus, your mother shared your pain, your destiny. As so often we hurt those we love, and fail those we hold dear, help us to share in the healing power of your love.

Sung verse: *Through her heart, his sorrow sharing, all his bitter anguish bearing, now at last the sword has pass'd.*

5) **UNISON** *Scripture – Meditation – Reflection*

Prayer: Lord, as we journey help us to see those who stagger along the path of the cross: the refugees, the homeless, the lonely. We ask for strong shoulders on which to ease the load of others and a heart filled with love for all.

Sung verse: *All that I am, all that I do, all that I'll ever have, I offer now to you. Take and sanctify these gifts for your honour, Lord. Knowing that I love and serve you is enough reward. All that I am, all that I do, all that I'll ever have I offer now to you.*

6) **TRUE ICON** *Scripture – Meditation – Reflection*

Prayer: Lord, help us to recognise you in the hidden corners of our world. In the forgotten ones, those who mean so little to the world, whose presence is never greeted with a smile. We ask that we might reflect your love for all people in everything that we do.

Sung verse: *Come, Lord Jesus, come. Come, take my heart, fill it with your love. Take it for your service Lord. Take it for your glory Lord. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Come, Lord Jesus, take my heart.*

7) **WITH US** *Scripture – Meditation – Reflection*

Prayer: Lord, to pick up our cross and follow you is a difficult request. It may be that in today's world our responsibilities are our crosses. Whatever the cross may we understand that only with you the burden is light.

Sung verse: *Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled, she beheld her tender child, all with bloody scourges rent.*

8) **NURTURING** *Scripture – Meditation – Reflection*

Prayer: Jesus, you are the beginning and the end, the one who leads us out of death into life. Help us be people who nurture, giving life to those who feel abandoned or let down in any way.

Sung verse: *Its me, its me, its me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer. Its me, its me, its me O Lord, standing in the need of prayer.*

9) **AMEN** *Scripture – Meditation – Reflection*

Prayer: Lord Jesus, when all looks to be too much, when we feel overburdened by life, when noting makes sense any longer; allow the warmth of your love to touch us.

Give us the strength to say our AMEN to God and to trust in the Father's care.

Sung verse: *Make me a channel of your peace. Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope. Where there is darkness only light, and where there's sadness ever joy.*

10) **WHOSE?** *Scripture – Meditation – Reflection*

Prayer: Lord, our ways are not peaceful ways. Fill us with your Spirit, that we may truly become your people, the one body of Christ. Heal our divisions and gives us courage to work for unity and peace.

Sung verse: *O how sad and sore distress'd was that mother highly blest, of the sole-begotten One.*

11) **FACE TO FACE** *Scripture – Meditation – Reflection*

Prayer: Lord of love and compassion, help us to be true to ourselves and to others. Give us a sensitive heart to ease the burden of those who can't help themselves.

Sung verse: *Strength and protection may they Passion be; O Blessed Jesus, hear and answer me; Deep in they wounds, Lord, hide and shelter me; So shall I never, never part from Thee.*

12) **HOLOCAUST** *Scripture – Meditation – Reflection*

Prayer: Lord, dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life. Fill our hearts with your courage so that we no longer remain bystanders but can be counted among those who work for justice and peace.

Sung verse: *Come, Lord Jesus, come. Come, take my life, take it for your own. Take it for your service Lord. Take it for your glory Lord. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Come, Lord Jesus, take my life.*

13) **MATERNAL WOMB** *Scripture – Meditation – Reflection*

Prayer: Lord of life, we pray with Mary, give us faith to love when our hearts feel cold. Give us hope when all seems lost, and trust when we feel bereft. In Jesus, may we find the source of our new life and our peace.

Sung verse: *You fear the light may be fading, you fear to lose your way. be still, and know I am near you. I'll lead you to the day and the sun.*

14) **CHRYSALIS** *Scripture – Meditation – Reflection*

Prayer: Help us to believe, Lord, that ends are but beginnings and that graves are but the doorway to a new life. For you are the Lord of the living and the dead.

Sung verse: *Dark descends but light unending shines through our night; you are with us, ever lending new strength to sight; one in love, your truth confessing, one in hope of heaven's blessing, may we see, in love's possessing, love's endless light.*

ON ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS

Ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door will be opened (Luke 11:9ff).

At times like this when we don't have the normal, easy access to the Sacrament of Reconciliation (which, incidentally, is the situation for millions of poor people every day and every year) we need to have confidence in God's mercy and compassion.

Thankfully Sacred Scripture, which is our rule of life, gives us many encouraging texts. And as Pope Francis has reminded us it is much simpler than some make out. We can pray directly to God and have the utmost confidence that God hears us. For all intents and purposes, we are on that desert island separated from our normal social and religious contacts but never separated from God's loving presence.

So first of all, let us recall how Jesus responded to people in their need. When the paralytic is being lowered through the roof, he doesn't say anything. It is Jesus who takes the initiative, "My child, your sins are forgiven". (Mark 2:5). Even when we cannot speak or find the right words Jesus knows our needs and freely responds with compassion. In the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11), the wasteful young man realises he will be much better off back with his father, not the most unselfish or perfect of motivations. He prepares his speech. However, his father, who has run to meet him, hugs him and kisses him. He doesn't even listen to his son's prepared words.

In John's gospel there are a number of encounters that Jesus has where there is neither an explicit confession nor an explicit word of forgiveness. The woman at the well is offered "living water" before she has even begun to relate her life story of five husbands plus one! (Jn 4:10). The paralytic of many years at the Sheep Pool is asked by Jesus, 'Do you want to be well again?' Jesus cures him and later on says to him: 'See, you are well again; do not sin anymore, or something worse may happen to you.' (Jn 5: 1-18). To the woman caught in adultery Jesus says: 'Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more.' (Jn 8:11). For Peter, after he has disowned Jesus, there was no recrimination or reproach just the three-fold invitation to love and pastoral responsibility (Jn 21:15).

The Lamb of God takes away the sin(s) of the whole world. However big our sins seem to us they cannot diminish God's mercy. St Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, a Carmelite sister (1873-1897) did not have any confidence in herself even though she wasn't conscious of any serious sin. She said that if she were the greatest sinner she would still have the same confidence in God's great love.

So with or without words let us bring our need for forgiveness before God. We are the poor in spirit (literally those who go begging in spirit) Matt 5:3) we come to God "without a plea"; with nothing but our need, our wounds and our helplessness. And God's patience is never exhausted, whether its seven times or seventy-seven times (Matt 18:21) the fountain of forgiveness never runs dry. God's love covers a multitude of sins (James 4:8).

"To you all flesh will come with its burden of sin. Too heavy for us our offences, but you wipe them away." (Psalm 65:4).

Psalm 51

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.
In your compassion blot out my offence.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin.

My offences truly I know them;
my sin is always before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned;
what is evil in your sight I have done.

That you may be justified when you give sentence
and be without reproach when you judge,
O see, in guilt I was born,
a sinner was I conceived.

Indeed you love truth in the heart;
then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom.
O purify me, then I shall be clean;
O wash me, I shall be whiter than snow.

Make me hear rejoicing and gladness
that the bones you have crushed may revive.
From my sins turn away your face.
and blot out all my guilt.

A pure heart create for me,
O God, put a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your holy spirit.

Give me again the joy of your help;
with a spirit of fervour sustain me,
that I may teach transgressors your ways
and sinners may return to you.

O rescue me, God, my helper,
and my tongue shall ring out your goodness.
O Lord, open my lips
and my mouth shall declare your praise.

For in sacrifice you take no delight,
burnt offering from me you would refuse;
my sacrifice, a contrite spirit,
a humbled, contrite heart you will not spurn.

In your goodness, show favour to Zion;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
Then you will be pleased with lawful sacrifice,
holocausts offered on your altar.

Psalm 130 (NRSV)

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.
Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;
my soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for the morning,

more than those who watch for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.
It is he who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

Prayer of Thanksgiving (Psalm 107)

O give thanks to the Lord for he is good; for his love endures forever.

Some wandered in the desert, in the wilderness,
finding no way to a city they could dwell in.
hungry they were and thirsty
their soul was fainting within them.

Then they cried to the Lord in their need
and he rescued them from their distress
and he led them along the right way,
to reach a city they could dwell in.

let them thank the Lord for his love,
for the wonders he does for his people:
for he satisfies the thirsty soul;
he fill the hungry with good things.

Some lay in darkness and in gloom,
prisoners in misery and chains,
having defied the words of God
and spurned the counsels of the Most High.
He crushed their spirit with toil;
they stumbled; there was no one to help.

Then they cried to the Lord in their need
and he rescued them from their distress.
He led them forth from darkness and gloom
and broke their chains to pieces.

Let them thank the Lord for his goodness,
for the wonders he does for his people,
for he bursts the gates of bronze
and shatters the iron bars.

Some were sick on account of their sins
and afflicted on account of their guilt
They had a loathing for every food;
they came close to the gates of death.

cont/.

Then they cried to the Lord in their need
and he rescued them from their distress,
sent forth a word of healing,
and saved their life from the grave.

Let them confess the love of the Lord,
the wonders God does for the people.
Let them offer a sacrifice of thanks
and tell of God's deeds with rejoicing.

Some sailed to the sea in ships
to trade on the mighty waters.
They saw the deeds of the Lord,
the wonders he does in the deep.

For God spoke and summoned the gale,
tossing the waves of the sea
up to heaven and back into the deep;
their souls melted away in distress.

They staggered reeled like drunkards,
for all their skill was gone.
Then they cried to the Lord in their need
and he rescued them from their distress.

God stilled the storm to a whisper;
all the waves of the sea were hushed.
They rejoiced because of the calm
and God led them to the haven they desired.

let them confess the love of the Lord,
the wonders God does for the people.
let them exalt God in the gathering of the people
giving praise in the meeting of the elders.

O give thanks to the Lord for he is good;
for his love endures forever.

SOME HYMNS FOR GOOD FRIDAY

O Sacred head ill-used,
*By reed and bramble scarred,
That idle blows have bruised,
And mocking lips have marred.
How dimmed that eye so tender,
How wan those cheeks appear,
How overcast that splendour,
That angel hosts revere!*

*What marvel if thou languish,
Vigour and virtue fled,
Wasted and spent with anguish,
And pale as are the dead.
O by thy foes' derision,
That death endured for me,
Grant that thy open vision
A sinner's eyes may see.*

*Good Shepherd, spent with loving,
Look on me, who have strayed,
Oft by those lips unmoving
With milk and honey stayed;
Spurn not a sinner's crying
Nor from the love out cast,
But rest thy head in dying
On these frail arms at last.*

*In this thy sacred Passion
O that some share had I!
O may thy Cross's fashion
O'er look me when I die!
For these dear pains that rack thee
A sinner's thanks receive;
O, lest in death I lack thee,
A sinner's care relieve.*

*Since death must be my ending,
In that dread hour of need,
My friendless cause befriending,
Lord, to my rescue speed;
Thyself, dear Jesus, trace me
That passage to the grave,
And from thy Cross embrace me
With arms outstretched to save.*

When I survey the wondrous cross

*On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.*

*See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

***Praise to the holiest in the height,
and in the depth be praise;
in all his words most wonderful,
most sure in all his ways!***

*O loving wisdom of our God!
when all was sin and shame,
a second Adam to the fight
and to the rescue came.*

*O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
which did in Adam fail,
should strive afresh against the foe,
should strive, and should prevail;*

*And that the highest gift of grace
should flesh and blood refine:
God's presence and his very self,
and essence all-divine.*

*O generous love! that he who came
as man to smite our foe,
the double agony for us
as man should undergo:*

*And in the garden secretly,
and on the cross on high,
should teach his brethren, and inspire
to suffer and to die.*

***Praise to the Holiest in the height,
and in the depth be praise;
in all his words most wonderful,
most sure in all his ways!***