

## Parish Service – Drouin 10<sup>th</sup>. April 2020

### Good Friday.

In preparation for this service think of something you could make in the form of a cross – unless, of course, you already have one. Try something in wood, like gathering pieces from outside, or try something in fabric, or perhaps you might paint, or even write a poem or meditation. Let your imagination run freely!

If you use a small table perhaps either a black or a red covering would be appropriate. Please remember other members of the congregation will be acting on one or more of these suggestions.

#### Opening sentence.

The authorities and the soldiers took Jesus, and he went out, carrying his cross, to the place of a skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him

*John 19:17-18*

*Place the cross in a central position.*

#### Collect for Good Friday.

Gracious Lord God, by giving up his life  
your Son, Jesus Christ, secured our eternal life.  
In your compassion give us your grace  
and in your mercy watch over us always;  
we ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

#### **Hymn. TiS 339 O sacred head sore wounded.**

O sacred head sore wounded / with grief and shame bowed down;  
O kingly head surrounded / with thorns your only crown;  
death's shadows rise before you / the glow of life decays;  
yet hosts of heaven adore you / and tremble as they gaze.

What language shall I borrow / to praise you, heavenly friend,  
for this your dying sorrow, / your mercy without end ?  
Such agony and dying ! / Such love to sinners free !  
O Christ, all grace supplying, / turn now your face on me.

In this your bitter Passion , / good Shepherd, think of me,  
look on me with compassion, / unworthy though I be;  
beneath your cross abiding / for ever would I rest,  
in your dear love confiding, / and with your presence blessed.

Lord, be my consolation, / my shield when death is near;  
remind me of your Passion, / be with me when I fear.  
My eyes shall then behold you, / upon your cross shall dwell,  
my heart by faith enfold you, / and who dies thus dies well.

Attributed to French born Bernard of Clairvaux 1091-1154 [Luther thought of him as "the best monk who ever lived"].

Translated by leading German Lutheran pastor Paulus Gerhardt 1607 – 1676.

### Prayer:

Gracious Lord God, we remember today that your Son, Jesus Christ, under-went extreme privations – hardships - suffering, sadness, pain and unutterable sorrow. In those circumstances he looked to you. He called you Father and he shouted “Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me, never-the-less not my will, but thine be done”. His Father is the same one we adore. You, God, are “our faithful, unchangeable friend whose love is as great as your power and neither knows measure nor end”. So in faith and in love we look to you in the world’s strange and straightened times. Lord God, in your love, in your compassion, and in your loving-kindness listen to our prayers. Meet us in mercy, minister to our hurts, and deepen our faith in your undying goodness. Amen

### Scripture

#### **Isaiah 52: 13 – 53:12 The fourth song of the Suffering Servant**

This fourth Song of the Suffering Servant is maybe one of the best known texts of the entire Old Testament. It is a sad, plaintive song that declares God’s innocent Servant was punished for *our* sins and crushed for *our* iniquities. Like a “lamb led to the slaughter,” he went silently to his death, a death that bore away our offenses and made us whole. Though the “suffering” of the Suffering Servant is more evident in this text than in the other three “songs,” [Isaiah 42:1–4; Isaiah 49:1–6; Isaiah 50:4–7;] this passage begins with a trumpet blast declaration of the Servant’s future glory. His exaltation, however, won’t spring from victory but from a well of deep sorrow. Though cast in the past tense, the Servant’s suffering is real, intense & profound.

One writer has suggested “perhaps what’s most remarkable about the Servant is how unremarkable he is: “no majestic bearing” to attract, “no beauty” to please the eye. He is shunned and avoided.

Modern Jewish interpretation of Isaiah 52:13 through to Isaiah 53:12 describes the servant of the LORD as the Nation of Israel itself: “*My servant...*” (Isaiah 53:11), “... *a man of pains and accustomed to illness ...*” (Isaiah 53:3). “The theme of Isaiah is jubilation, a song of celebration which anticipates the end of the Babylonian Captivity”.

Jewish teaching also does take note of the historical context in which God's Suffering Servant appears, particularly because it speaks in the past tense. It is a matter of historical fact that the Jewish nation has borne unspeakable injustices, under Assyria, Babylonia, Ancient Greece, ancient Rome, and, in more modern times, Nazi Germany.

Christians reading this passage have the idea that Jesus ‘fulfilled’ the idea of the suffering servant, perhaps more fully than the first writer/s of Isaiah might have even imagined.

### **Psalm 22:1-18 A desperate cry for deliverance.**

The New Oxford Annotated Bible describes Psalm 22 as a prayer for deliverance from earthly illness. It has the form of a lament. The writer laments what he understands as the fact that God has forsaken him vss 1 & 2. [please note that, rightly or wrongly, I am assuming the writer was indeed a man !].

In vss 3,4,&5 the writer writes of how God has dealt kindly, graciously with Israel's ancestors which makes it all the harder to figure out why God has abandoned him in his time of need. The writer's state is indeed miserable because after all he is "a worm and not a man" giving the impression that he is not worthy of God's care, or attention or compassion. And yet it was God "who took me from my mother's womb v.9]. People ridicule and 'encircle' him [v.12] and his 'heart is like wax' [v.14].

In the end it is futile to try to guess what the Psalmist's trouble might have been but he was in a woeful frame of body and mind. Maybe like Job who suffered, was poorly comforted by so called 'friends, jeered at by neighbours, and yet throughout remained faithful to God.

It seems to me that both Job and the writer of Psalm 22 suffered the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" as in this quote from the bard.

"To be or not to be: that is the question.  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against the sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them?"

William Shakespeare Hamlet Act 3. Sc 1

Maybe we wouldn't be drawing too long a bow to suggest that thousands of people throughout the world are suffering "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" or are tossing "against the sea of troubles". At any rate there's no doubt that the current crisis [you know the one I mean ? ] has brought and is continuing to bring deep trouble to thousands upon thousands of men and women – those dying, those suffering and those caring.

Jesus quotes from this psalm in his cry of dereliction from the Cross "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me" [Mt 27:46]. Doesn't this show the terror of Jesus' experience? What pages of history tell the tale of human desolation? Have you ever felt abandoned by God?

But notice too that Jesus is able to say "My God, My God".

#### **A short prayer:**

O God, as on this most solemn day, we stand at the foot of the Cross, may the love that was sown there stream into our hearts, challenging and subduing them and winning from us that response which is your will for us. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

This prayer is from Leslie D. Weatherhead's book A Private House of Prayer. 1958

#### **John 18:1 – 19:42 The Passion narrative.**

**This is a long reading so if you find it too long go for the shorter one of John 19:17-30, If you opt for the longer passage, you could take it in sections with quiet pauses between e.g. 18:1-14, then 15 – 24, followed by 25 – 40. Ch 19: 1- 37 and lastly 38 – 42.**

Donald Baillie's book God Was in Christ is [a more recent classic –1950's] an attempt to understand who Christ is and the significance of his life. Baillie, a Scottish minister and theologian, [died 31<sup>st</sup>. October

1954] aims to affirm the classic teaching of the Church about Christ and to do so in a way that makes sense. The book concentrates on both the doctrine of Incarnation and Atonement. I want to point you to a rather extended passage on the Atonement which is under the heading **Why did Jesus die ?** Dr Baillie argues that we cannot understand the death of Jesus apart from the way he lived his life and exercised his public ministry. “The men who shaped the traditions and wrote the story down in the four Gospels, devoted an altogether disproportionate amount of their space to the passion and death of their Master because to them and their fellow Christians this was of supreme importance....and if we say, with the voice of the Christian ages, that Jesus died for sinners, it will be well for us to realize that this is profoundly true.... in respect of Jesus’ personal relations with the sinners in ancient Galilee”.

And are we, is humanity, much different from those who lived in Galilee so long ago?

Baillie then asks what the question **Why did Jesus die?** meant or means. There are a number of possibilities which he lists. I won’t burden you with them.

The author then writes: “It is true, I believe, that Jesus accepted the Cross as from the will and purpose of God. but it was by human faith that he did it, not by the superhuman knowledge which ‘can declare the end from the beginning’ . And as it would be artificial to think of him as setting forth from the beginning with the clear consciousness that he had come into the world to die a violent death for human salvation, it would be equally artificial to think of him as forming the *intention* ...of being condemned to death. The evidence of the Gospels leaves no room for such an idea of Jesus’ plans...

The Gospels were written at a time when Christians could look back and glory in the Cross as ordained by the purpose of God **but they do not conceal the fact that to Jesus himself, when he looked forward and saw that it was likely, and even when he embraced it by faith, it appeared as an unspeakable tragedy, and that up to the last night he hoped and prayed that it might not come.**

Go into almost any cemetery and you won’t have to look far or long before you see the symbol of a cross. And the crosses in Military cemeteries are prominent in many different countries – e.g. Belgium, France Germany.

Good heavens – you can see crosses as an item of jewellery round the necks of some people who haven’t a clue regarding the meaning of the Cross. Such is life !!!

Dr Baillie again: “it is important to realize, Jesus did not die as a helpless victim:

- he could have escaped, and he went on with his eyes open. Not only in the Galilean days, but even in Jerusalem almost up to the last;
- he could have steered clear of the trouble and danger by changing his course. If he had been content to give up his troublesome activities and retire into private life, the authorities would doubtless have been glad to let him do it; indeed that was precisely what, by opposition and intimidation of various kinds, they had tried to make him do He would have saved them a great deal of trouble, he would have saved his life. That was the choice he had to make;
- he could have saved his own life, but it would have meant the loss of all he had lived for. So he would not turn aside from the path that was leading him to suffering, shame and death”.

We are left with Dr. Baillie’s question **Why did Jesus die?** The writer of 2 Corinthians in 5:19 puts it like this “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us [i.e. the apostles] the message of reconciliation. The superlative divine work of God was accomplished in Christ the obedient servant. Divinity at

work in and mongst humanity! That might be considered Good News. Yes ?

God's reconciling work then is done in the totality of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That message is accepted and promulgated by the apostles. It becomes central in Christian theology and central too in the faith life of every Christian – man, woman, young person and child. It is into this faith that we are baptised, nurtured and, by the grace of God, in which we shall die. **Let it be so.**

### **Hymn TiS 349 In the Cross of Christ I glory.**

In the Cross of Christ I glory / towering o'er the wrecks of time.  
all the light of sacred story / gathers round its head sublime.

Through the Cross, Christ's love empowers us / worldliness and self deny;  
by his Spirit it inspires us, / him, through love, to glorify.

When the woes of life o'er take us, / hopes deceive and fears annoy,  
never shall the cross forsake us / from it shines our peace and joy.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure, / by the cross are sanctified;  
peace is there that knows no measure, / joys that through all time abide.

In the Cross of Christ I glory / towering o'er the wrecks of time.  
all the light of sacred story / gathers round its head sublime.

*Sir John Bowring 1792-1872. A man of prodigious learning; mastered 6 languages by age 16, diplomat & politician.  
v 2 Charles Fouvey 1928 - Melbourne Aust. Electrical engineer. Worked on sub committee for TiS.*

### **Prayers of Intercession.**

Lord God, Holy and Exceptionally Good,  
As we remember you, we ask you to remember  
each individual member of our congregation,  
especially those having hard and stressful times  
their families and their friends  
and all your people the world over.

We remember that it was "the world Christ suffered to redeem"  
and that is why we pray for the world,

- the world's many nations
- the world's innocent suffering ones,
- the world's poor marginalised ones,
- the world's "left over" 'forgotten' ones
- the world's fast fading dying ones.

*[Take a moment to pray for people whom you know in your own hearts – those who depend on you to pray for them - and include those who don't even know you pray for them]. And remember also that the church's work is to pray for those who don't know how or who have forgotten how to pray for themselves].*

### **The Lord's Prayer.**

Our Father in heaven, / hallowed be your name  
your kingdom come, / your will be done / on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread,

Forgive us our sins / as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial / and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours / now and for ever. Amen

**Hymn TiS 343 Nature with open volume stands.**

Nature with open volume stands / to spread her maker’s praise abroad;  
and every labour of his hands / shows something worthy of a God.

But in the grace that rescued us / his brightest form of glory shines;  
here, on the cross, ‘tis fairest drawn / in precious blood and crimson lines.

Here his whole name appears complete / nor wit can guess, nor reason prove,  
which of the letters best is writ / the power, the wisdom, or the love.

O the sweet wonders of that cross / where God my Saviour loved and died !  
Her noblest life my spirit draws / from his dear wounds, and bleeding side.

I would for ever spread his name / in sounds to mortal ears unknown,  
with angels join to praise the Lamb, / and worship at his Father’s side.

*Isaac Watts 1674 – 1748. Thirty five of his hymns appear in TiS*

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you  
and be gracious unto you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you  
and give you peace.

*Numbrs 6:24-26*

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