

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah:

See, my servant shall prosper, he shall be raised high and greatly exalted. Even as many were amazed at him — so marred was his look beyond human semblance and his appearance beyond that of the sons of man — so shall he startle many nations, because of him kings shall stand speechless; for those who have not been told shall see, those who have not heard shall ponder it. Who would believe what we have heard? To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up like a sapling before him, like a shoot from the parched earth; there was in him no stately bearing to make us look at him, nor appearance that would attract us to him. He was spurned and avoided by people, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity, one of those from whom people hide their faces, spurned, and we held him in no esteem. Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured, while we thought of him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins; upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; but the LORD laid upon him the guilt of us all. Though he was harshly treated, he submitted and opened not his mouth; like a lamb led to the slaughter or a sheep before the shearers, he was silent and opened not his mouth. Oppressed and condemned, he was taken away, and who would have thought any more of his destiny? When he was cut off from the land of the living, and smitten for the sin of his people, a grave was assigned him among the wicked and a burial place with evildoers, though he had done no wrong nor spoken any falsehood. But the LORD was pleased to crush him in infirmity. If he gives his life as an offering for sin, he shall see his descendants in a long life, and the will of the LORD shall be accomplished through him. Because of his affliction he shall see the light in fullness of days; through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear. Therefore I will give him his portion among the great, and he shall divide the spoils with the mighty, because he surrendered himself to death and was counted among the wicked; and he shall take away the sins of many, and win pardon for their offenses.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25

***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 rescue me. Into your hands I commend my spirit; you will redeem me, O LORD, O faithful God.

***Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.***

For all my foes I am an object of reproach, a laughingstock to my neighbors, and a dread to my friends; they who see me abroad flee from me. I am forgotten like the unremembered dead; I am like a dish that is broken.

***Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.***

But my trust is in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God. In your hands is my destiny; rescue me from the clutches of my enemies and my persecutors."

***Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.***

Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your kindness. Take courage and be stouthearted, all you who hope in the LORD.

***Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.***

SECOND READING: Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews:

Brothers and sisters: Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help. In the days when Christ was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL: 18:1—19:42

+A reading from the holy gospel according to John

Jesus went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to where there was a garden, into which he and his disciples entered. Judas his betrayer also knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas got a band of soldiers and guards from the chief priests and the Pharisees and went there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Jesus, knowing everything that was going to happen to him, went out and said to them, "Whom are you looking for?" They answered him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I AM." Judas his betrayer was also with them. When he said to them, "I AM, " they turned away and fell to the ground. So he again asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" They said, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus answered, "I told you that I AM. So if you are looking for me, let these men go." This was to fulfill what he had said, "I have not lost any of those you gave me." 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. Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its scabbard. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father gave me?" So the band of soldiers, the tribune, and the Jewish guards seized Jesus, bound him, and brought him to Annas first. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had counseled the Jews that it was better that one man should die rather than the people. Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Now the other disciple was known to the high priest, and he entered the courtyard of the high priest with Jesus. But Peter stood at the gate outside. So the other disciple, the acquaintance of the high priest, went out and spoke to the gatekeeper and brought Peter in. Then the maid who was the gatekeeper said to Peter, "You are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." Now the slaves and the guards were standing around a charcoal fire that they had made, because it was cold, and were warming themselves. Peter was also standing there keeping warm. The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his doctrine.

Jesus answered him, "I have spoken publicly to the world. I have always taught in a synagogue or in the temple area where all the Jews gather, and in secret I have said nothing. Why ask me? Ask those who heard me what I said to them. They know what I said." When he had said this, one of the temple guards standing there struck Jesus and said, "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. Now Simon Peter was standing there keeping warm. And they said to him, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the one whose ear Peter had cut off, said, "Didn't I see you in the garden with him?" Again Peter denied it. And immediately the cock crowed. Then they brought Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium. It was morning. And they themselves did not enter the praetorium, in order not to be defiled so that they could eat the Passover. So Pilate came out to them and said, "What charge do you bring against this man?" They answered and said to him, "If he were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." At this, Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law." The Jews answered him, "We do not have the right to execute anyone," in order that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled that he said indicating the kind of death he would die. So Pilate went back into the praetorium and summoned Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own or have others told you about me?" Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here." So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say 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." Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" When he had said this, he again went out to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in him. But you have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at Passover. Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" They cried out again, "Not this one but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a revolutionary. Then Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged. And the soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and clothed him in a purple cloak, and they came to him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck him repeatedly. Once more Pilate went out and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you, so that you may know that I find no guilt in him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. And he said to them, "Behold, the man!" When the chief priests and the guards saw him they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him. I find no guilt in him." The Jews answered, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." Now when Pilate heard this statement, he became even more afraid, and went back into the praetorium and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" Jesus did not answer him. So Pilate said to him, "Do you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you and I have power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me if it had not been given to you from above. For this reason the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin." Consequently, Pilate tried to release him; but the Jews cried out, "If you release him, you are not a Friend of Caesar. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." When Pilate heard these words he brought Jesus out and seated him on the judge's bench in the place called Stone Pavement, in Hebrew, Gabbatha. It was preparation day for Passover, and it was about noon. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your king!" They cried out, "Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!"

Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and, carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews." Now many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that he said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four shares, a share for each soldier. They also took his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top down. So they said to one another, "Let's not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it will be," in order that the passage of Scripture might be fulfilled that says: They divided my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots. This is what the soldiers did. Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst." There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, "It is finished." And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit. Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and that they be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out. An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that you also may come to believe. For this happened so that the Scripture passage might be fulfilled: Not a bone of it will be broken. And again another passage says: They will look upon him whom they have pierced. After this, Joseph of Arimathea, secretly a disciple of Jesus for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus. And Pilate permitted it. So he came and took his body. Nicodemus, the one who had first come to him at night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about one hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and bound it with burial cloths along with the spices, according to the Jewish burial custom. Now in the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been buried. So they laid Jesus there because of the Jewish preparation day; for the tomb was close by. The Gospel of the Lord.

### **Reflection for Good Friday 2022**

Isaiah's prophecy sounds familiar, doesn't it? It should. The early Church noted the similarities between Jesus and Isaiah's Suffering Servant early on. We can forget that the only scriptures that those first believers in Jesus had were the Tanakh, the Hebrew bible, and Pentateuch, the Greek version of the bible. There were no Christian scriptures until much later. We also forget that the very early Church was almost exclusively Jewish. Christianity was also a form of Judaism early on. However, there's another point of view for this passage. Did Jesus' death

shape the meaning of this passage or did the passage shape the early Church's vision of who Jesus was? I point out that the gospels were written years after the events they depict and always from the knowledge of the Jewish scriptures and the coming of the Holy Spirit. They were written in faith for those who already believe.

There is another approach to this passage. They also had a contemporary meaning. It's true that Isaiah may have seen God's word as leading to an individual Messiah to save God's people, but the servant may have also been a collective. Isaiah may have been speaking of the entire nation of God's people. It was common to refer to God's people as an individual, Jacob or Israel for an example. The names belonged to one man, the younger son of Isaac, Abraham's son. He had, or his wife Rebecca had, twin boys, Esau and Jacob. Jacob tricked his way to become the elder, chosen son, as was God's will. God changed his name to Israel, the same name for the nation of God's people.

All the alienation, suffering and oppression described, happened to the entire nation while in exile. This God's people endured while remaining faithful to God. Suffering can be a way to atone for sin. An individual's sins could be forgiven through the collective atonement of all God's people. This is the opposite of how we have come to know God's saving love. Instead of God receiving the sacrifice of the entire people, God received the sacrifice of the One, Jesus; once and for all.

As the nations of the world could witness the faith of Israel and know God's presence through them, we know God's presence through Jesus and in his death, know God's salvation. Isaiah may speak to us through his writings, but first he spoke to the believers of his time; the people of Israel. They found meaning in scripture long before we did. Jesus is the filter through whom we now interpret Isaiah's words

High priesthood, as a Tradition, dates to Eli in the books of Samuel. It continued up to approximately the year 70 of the Common Era. That marked the destruction, for the last time, of the Temple of Jerusalem. It also marked the destruction of the whole city by the Romans who captured the people and carried them and the wealth of the city to Rome as war booty. The Flavian Amphitheater, we call it the Coliseum of Rome, was built by Jewish captive slaves and with the captured wealth of Jerusalem. After this, the ancient high priesthood ended.

As Christians, we have no high priesthood. The High Priest offered sacrifice for the sins of the nation and the individual sins of its people, including his own, during the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur. In Jesus day, one of the temple priests was elected to the position for a year and would preside, performing the yearly, redemptive sacrifice on the Day. For us Jesus is our High Priest. It was his freely chosen suffering and death that has saved all of humanity once and for all. God sacrificed God to God for us. No other sacrifice could do this. We add nothing to God but God gives us all gifts; life, love, freedom, forgiveness, salvation and eternal life. Jesus' High Priesthood and sacrifice has bonded humanity with bonds that cannot be broken by sin or death. Jesus has entrusted us into God's hands.

The Passion of John's gospel is the gospel of Good Friday. We rotate the other three in years A, B, and C on Passion Sunday, which we also call Palm Sunday. It follows the same pattern of betrayal, arrest, trial, denial, torture, death and burial as the rest of the passion narratives, but

in a slightly different way. There is far more symbolism in John's story. He linked Jesus to Genesis in the Hebrew Scriptures by invoking the sacred and unutterable name of God that God spoke to Moses; I AM. Upon hearing it, the rabble who arrested Jesus, fell to the ground and delayed his capture. It is full of dialogue that reveals more of Jesus divine identity and mission. There are also specific details found nowhere else in scripture.

Pilate, even though he proclaimed Jesus to be an innocent man, had him scourged. Scourging was a torture meant only for those who were condemned to die, for due to the seriousness of the ordeal, they often did. John's gospel is the only one to have Jesus die with his people close to the cross. In the other three, they were either not present at all or present at a distance. They were close enough to carry on a conversation. Jesus dismissed his disciples when he was arrested. He did so to fulfill a prophecy that none of them be lost. No one ran away.

Who is the beloved disciple? I like to let the theologians debate that. Who are Jesus beloved ones? Certainly his Father, but also his brothers and sisters, including you and me, for whom he died. Ignatius Loyola developed a method of contemplation that involves imagination. The one who contemplates begins with a scripture passage and takes a role within the given story. The person prays the story as if an actual participant. I have always found this to be a difficult process because that's what I've done, in fantasy, with movies, TV shows and books. I read an article that John, in never naming the beloved one, opened the doors for any or each of us to assume our role in the gospel story. The beloved one who sought and believed could be you or me; if we choose to participate in the life and death of Jesus.

John never named the mother of Jesus in his gospel. We bring the name of Mary into it ourselves from other sources. So who is this unnamed woman, Jesus' mother? I believe that she symbolizes the Church to which we all belong, serve and give our care. This is an approach to this gospel that can change us. Jesus had each of us and our respective service in mind as he died on the cross. His words as he died were meant for our challenge and comfort. He died with you and me in mind and on his lips.

This is our story of salvation. Salvation, as scripture says, is from the Jews. God, our sense of covenant, prayer, liturgy and Jesus all come from ancient and Jewish roots. We have benefitted by Jesus rejection by the crowds. He died partly due to their urging, but always died by God's plan and providence. Jesus and his disciples were Jews and we believe because of them. At the end of the Passion, it is two faithful, Jewish elders who stepped forward to claim, embalm and bury Jesus dead body and place it, albeit temporarily, in someone's empty tomb. Judas betrayed Jesus, Peter denied him. None of the other nine were present but the Beloved One. These two Jewish elders testify that Jesus was not rejected by all of his own. Many believed. As we believe and are beloved of Jesus, does this story fill us with dread or joy? Can we hear the Good News in Jesus' death?

May we know the bounty of the Lord in the land of the living.

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