

Resources for Good Friday

Friday 18 April 2025

Lectionary Readings (*depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on*)

Isaiah 52.13 - end of 53; Psalm 22 [1-11] or 1-21; Hebrews 10.16-25 [or Hebrews 4.14-16 and 5.7-9]; John 18.1 - end of 19

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd Jane Rees, Priest - Associate Vicar, March (Benefice)

Today is the day that the church across the world refers to as "Good Friday".

There has been much speculation about the origin of the name "Good Friday" and several theories put forward

One explanation is that "good" used to be synonymous with "holy", so the name "Good Friday" actually originally meant "Holy Friday".

Another explanation is that this sacred day was in the first instance simply known as "God's Friday", which over the years changed to "Good Friday".

For many Christians though the name "Good" Friday comes from remembering what it is we believe.

Jesus' death on the cross was a sacrifice that redeemed all of humanity from our sins, because through the Cross we have the gift of salvation and eternal life.

For Christians everywhere - it is a day to gather together for reflection and meditation.

Yesterday we sat with Jesus at the Last Supper and listened to his words of serving and loving one another. We walked with him to Gethsemane and waited and prayed with him trying to keep watch just as he asked.

Today we go to Calvary with him and see the agony of those final hours.

Today is a sombre day.

A day to reflect on Jesus' suffering.

A day to ponder on the question of suffering for all humanity.

For Jesus didn't come to take away or remove the suffering of our world - instead as the catholic poet Paul Claudel writes '...He came to fill it with his presence'.

As we stand at the cross, we see through the trauma of the human agony to the heart of God's love. A love that liberates and sets free. A love that is Emmanuel - God with us - in all that we ourselves are called to endure through our own lives and those of our loved ones.

Good Friday is not meant to celebrate suffering or negate the reality of what so many undergo. Yet the Cross remains at the heart of our faith - for it conveys to us a Love so great that not even death can defeat it.

The founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate - Saint Eugene de Mazenod encountered this Love. For many years as a young man he felt that his life had little meaning or purpose. It was on Good Friday in 1807 while in church that he had a religious experience. He felt suddenly that the crucifix was gazing straight at him.

In that moment it was as if Jesus was saying to him directly - *look at me on the cross; if I am here, it is because of you, it is because I love you.*

Eugene experienced no condemnation or fear in this encounter with Jesus; for him, the cross that Good Friday was a unique place where the Love of God was fully revealed to him for the first time in a way that he clearly understood it.

From this point on, Eugene dedicated his life to God and to serving the poor.

I wonder what we see when we gaze upon the Cross on this Good Friday?

Do we see the love of our Saviour as Eugene de Mazenod did?

Do we see beyond the torture and the suffering the Romans intended to the redemption that God offers us all?

In 2017 the Hungarian Jew Edith Eger wrote about her family's imprisonment at Auschwitz and her subsequent life afterwards. She moved to America and became an eminent psychologist. The book 'The Choice' tells the story about how her parents were sent straight to the gas chambers but the teenagers Edith and her sister Magda survived. It was towards the end of the war that Edith recounts the guards increased in cruelty offering food and then taking it away. Both the teenagers were starving to death when they were given a tin of sardines but without any way of opening it.

On the verge of death, their bodies were heaped with those who had already passed away. Edith describes hearing the voices of American soldiers who had entered the camp. 'Raise your hand if you are alive,' shouted one. But neither Edith nor Magda had the strength to move. It was then Edith saw a beam of bright light. It attracted the soldiers' attention, and they came across to find both sisters' still alive. The light was the sun catching the shiny tin of sardines clutched in Magda's hand. What had been the instrument of their torture, became the very means of their rescue and liberation.

As we take time this Good Friday to stand before the Cross, we remember that this instrument of such tremendous suffering was for us the means of our rescue, our salvation, and our eternal life. This was why Jesus had come - this was 'his hour' as the gospel writer John says. He is giving his life for the life of the world. The cross of death became the gift of Life.

Let us then respond on this sacred day in faith to God's great love and the suffering of our Lord in the manner of St Eugene de Mazenod - by living our lives in solidarity with all who are going through suffering today, reaching out to the marginalised, the disadvantaged, those who have been abandoned, those who hunger and thirst, the naked, the sick and the dying. For the sake of the Cross and the love of our Saviour. Amen.

Optional prayer:

Eternal God,
in the cross of Jesus
we see the cost of our sin,
and the depth of your love:
in humble hope and fear
may we place at his feet
all that we have and all that we are,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.
Amen

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

These are taken from Church of England Common Worship liturgy for Good Friday:

God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world,
but that the world might be saved through him.

Therefore, we pray to our heavenly Father for people everywhere
according to their needs.

Let us pray for the Church of God throughout the world:

for unity in faith, in witness and in service,
for bishops and other ministers, and those whom they serve,
for Dagmar, our bishop, and the people of this diocese,
for all Christians in this place, for those to be baptized,
for those who are mocked and persecuted for their faith,
that God will confirm his Church in faith, increase it in love, and preserve it in peace.
Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us pray for the nations of the world and their leaders:

for Charles, our King and the Parliaments of this land,
for those who administer the law and all who serve in public office,
for all who strive for justice and reconciliation,
that by God's help the world may live in peace and freedom.
Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us pray for God's ancient people, the Jews,
the first to hear his word:

for greater understanding between Christian and Jew,
for the removal of our blindness and bitterness of heart,
that God will grant us grace to be faithful to his covenant,
and to grow in the love of his name.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us pray for those who do not believe the gospel of Christ:
for those who have not heard the message of salvation,
for all who have lost faith,
for the contemptuous and scornful,
for those who are enemies of Christ and persecute those who follow him,
for all who deny the faith of Christ crucified,
that God will open their hearts to the truth
and lead them to faith and obedience.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us pray for all those who suffer:
for those who are deprived and oppressed,
for all who are sick,
for those in darkness, in doubt and in despair, in loneliness and in fear,
for prisoners, captives and refugees,
for the victims of false accusations and violence,
for all at the point of death and those who watch beside them,
that God in his mercy will sustain them
with the knowledge of his love.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us commend ourselves and all God's children to his unfailing love,
and pray for the grace of a holy life,
that, with all who have died in the peace of Christ,
we may come to the fullness of eternal life
and the joy of the resurrection.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Standing at the foot of the cross,

let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

Most merciful God,

who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ

delivered and saved the world:

grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross

we may triumph in the power of his victory;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and forever.

Amen

Suggested hymns/songs

Ah holy Jesus how hast thou offended

In the cross of Christ I glory

My God I love thee not because

My Song is love unknown

O Sacred head sore wounded

Ours were the sufferings he bore

The Old Rugged Cross

Rock of Ages cleft for me

When I survey the wondrous cross

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@ lectionary resource)