

St Nicholas Church Sighthill

online (Zoom)

Good Friday Service



We come together now to meditate on the cross.
We will meditate tonight through readings and images.
Through prayers and silence.

(pause)

We gather at the foot of the cross to hear of Jesus suffering; to hear Christ speak to us from His agony.

Via Dolorosa with Christ

Today (Good Friday, 2 April 2021), during this time of lockdown and uncertainty, our minds turn to the suffering of Jesus; a suffering that culminated into His death on the cross at Calvary. For some, the cross is simply as a shiny bling-bling. Others use it again simply as a label to identify them or the religious group they belong to. But for all Christians; for all disciples of Christ, the cross of Christ is a powerful symbol. It is our sign of hope. It exists to orient us, to direct us and to transform our relationship with God, other people and God's creation. It was at that the cross of Christ that the painful separation from God was effectively replaced by intimacy and joy; and because of that same cross, we obtained a new and indeed enriched self-understanding. Now, wherever we are because of the fall - we must deny, and wherever we are because of creation - we must affirm. And this new self-understanding should produce self-sacrifice in terms of our worship of God and service to others.

And [as I look up to the cross] when I think that God, His Son not sparing sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in. [But I am forever grateful] 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

(John) Bible Reading: Matthew 27.27-31

Then Pilate's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's palace, and the whole company gathered around him. They stripped off his clothes and put a scarlet robe on him. Then they made a crown out of thorny branches and placed it on his head, and put a stick in his right hand; then they knelt before him and made fun of him. **"Long live the King of the Jews!"** they said. They spat on him, and took the stick and hit him over the head. When they had finished making fun of him, they took the robe off and put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.



<https://thinktheology.org/2019/12/27/jesus-trial-before-pilate-follow-me-part-71/>

Hymn: Man of Sorrows, what a name!

[https://youtu.be/ z3wuwHQ6Q](https://youtu.be/z3wuwHQ6Q)

(Ann Sutherland) Prayer

Mysterious God, eternal and wise,
we come to you confused and uncertain
We stand at the foot of the cross,
the cross where Jesus, your Son, died,
a lonely painful death,
a death that reveals the depth of your love for us.

(pause)

We come this evening to remember:
to remember that your love overcomes death;
that your love is greater than our hate;
that your love can restore all things.

(pause)

Forgive us, O God,
for those times when we forsake you,
when we leave you dying on the cross and turn away from you.

(pause)

Forgive us, O God,
for those times when we ignore the suffering all around us and choose
instead the way of selfish indulgence.

(pause)

God of grace and mercy,
forgive us and renew us,
give us strength and courage to carry our cross each day to put self behind
and others first.
May we die to self that you might live through us.
In the name of the risen one we pray. Amen.

(Thelma Hunter) Reading Matthew 27.32-44

As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene named Simon, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross. They came to a place called Golgotha, which means, "The Place of the Skull." There they offered Jesus wine mixed with a bitter substance; but after tasting it, he would not drink it. They crucified him and then divided his clothes among them by throwing dice. After that they sat there and watched him. Above his head they put the written notice of the accusation against him: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Then they crucified two bandits with Jesus, one on his right and the other on his left.

(Pause)

People passing by shook their heads and hurled insults at Jesus: "You were going to tear down the Temple and build it back up in three days! Save yourself if you are God's Son! Come on down from the cross!"

In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the Law and the elders made fun of him: "He saved others, but he cannot save himself! Isn't he the king of Israel? If he will come down off the cross now, we will believe in him! He trusts in God and claims to be God's Son. Well, then, let us see if

God wants to save him now!" Even the bandits who had been crucified with him insulted him in the same way.

A picture of a nail



<https://strengthforthebattle.com/2013/03/29/i-am-the-nail/>

With this hammer, nails and crown of thorns let us think of Jesus hanging on a rugged Roman cross. Hanging there for you and me. Hanging there for us.

Hymn: In the cross of Christ, I glory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQ6STDupgCY>

(Rhona Ferguson) A monologue by Mary.



<https://nursingthefaitth.wordpress.com/2017/04/10/standing-at-the-foot-of-the-cross/>

The worst of it was not when he finally died.
to see there was no more heaving of his chest,
no more breath being gasped for, was a relief.
His pain was over.
They could not lay a hand on him anymore.

(pause)

I longed to reach for him,
to cut him down from there,
to cradle him.
That was not the worst of it.
Seeing him exposed and broken and being unable to hold him one last time,
even in death.

(pause)

No mother should have to see her child tortured,
mocked, insulted, like he was.
The way they treated him,
like the lowest of criminals.
Oh my boy.

(pause)

But not once did he spit back, or scream, or protest.
Not even as he took the whip,
as his skin broke and bled.
Even that was not the worst of it.

(pause)

And the cruelty of crowning him with thorns,
dressing him up like a king,
parading him out in the streets,
bowing and scraping around him,
jeering and howling like crazed animals,
enjoying their contempt for him.

(pause)

And I could not stop them.
I could not stop any of it.
I could not rescue my son,
I could not even grasp his hand,

Speak a word of love in the chaos.

(pause)

I tried to keep as close as I could,
in all the pushing and shoving of men and soldiers,
but I was powerless to ease his torment.
Even that was not the worst of it.

(pause)

I could not look as they took the nails and ropes and
forced him down then hoisted him up.
I knew what to expect,
we have all seen it before.
The wretchedness of hanging there, for days,
waiting for the mercy of death.
How long would it be for him?
How long till he breathed his last?
I feared it would be slow and long and terrible for him.
But that was not the worst of it.

(pause)

No, the worst of it was his shout,
his wail of abandonment.
I do not know how he had the breath for such a harrowing cry.
He cried against heaven, against the Almighty,
a final desolate groaning at being forsaken in the end.
Forsaken by his Father.

(pause)

At the end of your faithful,
passionate, joyful life,
my son, in the end they defeated you.

(pause)

Oh my child.
You were never cut off,
forgotten, left by our God.

(pause)

You were never abandoned, even at the last!

(pause)

But you cried out the misery of being deserted,
the pain overwhelming you in the end.
Who can blame you?

(pause)

But after all your years of hope and faith,
All you taught us, all your life and laughter,
I cannot bear that at the end you felt cast aside by your Father,
our Father. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

(pause)

Jesus, my boy, if only I could tell you,
it was never like that.
You were anything but forsaken!
You were loved to the end,
Loved beyond death.
Oh God, why did they break you so completely?
Why?

(long pause)

Come and lay your nail on the cross,
Seeking and accepting his forgiveness.

Prayer

He carried the cross even as soldiers mocked and maimed him
and poured scorn as freely as his blood.
He carried the cross even as Simon lifted it from his torn shoulders
and the crowd saw glint of bone.
He carried the cross even as he hung in agony
and tasted the bitterness of wine and waging.
He carried the cross even as the devil taunted and tested and offered a way out.
He carried the cross even as darkness cast its shadow
and the earth shook as if the dead walked upon it.
He carried the cross even as women and warrior wept and wondered at the
waste. He carries the cross even as the world waits for all sin
and sorrow to be laid down for all time.

(pause)

Lord Jesus, your greatest gift to us was to live the way of love no matter what, even when it led to a horrible, painful death, that we might see how much God loves us.

(pause)

May we understand that you call us to die to our selfish wants and desires so that we might care for others.

(pause)

May we take up our cross tonight, and listen to your voice calling us to love and care for the people in our world.

(pause)

O God, direct us in your way.
May we follow you and be faithful to our calling.
Walk with us and never forsake us as we carry our cross and reveal your kingdom here on earth, today and always, Amen.

Final hymn: When I survey the wondrous cross
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqgmgeuZ1E4>

Benediction

Lead us, O God, to a new realm.
To look towards the light.
To let go of fear and hear you calling again.
To travel the difficult path of the cross,
knowing that you travel with us.
Help us Father hear you calling to us.

Come, follow, walk the way.
And we will follow you Father,
On the journey into the light.
Amen