

Good Friday Meditations 2021 – from Fr. Mike

A short Good Friday journey with St. Andrews Church Newcastle, during Covid – 2021

Priest: Almighty God, whose dear Son went not up to joy but first He suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified; grant that we, walking in the Way of the Cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

(After each meditation is introduced the following prayer is said)

Before each guided meditation

Priest: We adore you Oh Christ, and we bless you

All: Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

(Short meditation followed by brief period of silence)

After each meditation

Priest: O God, the searcher of hearts

All: Help us to see ourselves in the light of your holiness; so that we may turn from our sins, receive your grace and forgiveness, and learn to know, love and serve you better. Amen.

And so, the journey to the Cross begins...

1. Jesus is Condemned

The world is in a constant state of flux. Coronavirus has emphasised that change is indeed the only constant! Change is an everyday experience; now a daily reality. To be 'in Christ' is to be changed 'from Glory to Glory' ... BUT

TO PLAY SAFE – with our private prayers

To play safe – with our common life together in worship, is to be STATIC.

To be, one-dimensional ... To be, in effect, *condemned*.

Preserve us, please, from being cardboard Christians; condemned to mediocrity. Enfold us, Lord, in the excitement of your three-dimensional Trinity. Make us one – as you are one...

Short Silence

O God, the searcher of hearts... etc

2. Jesus receives/bears His Cross

Think back to the last time a doctor or a nurse gave you (or someone you love) an injection.

Were you asked to watch as the needle went in? Did you want to watch, or would you rather not look?

When your cross comes, you will not always see it; you will not always *want* to see it, but by Jesus Christ you will feel it! And it may hurt a little; it could hurt a lot, or perhaps just scratch, but you will not be broken by it...

So, Christ is our healer, which is supposed to do us all good, and for this we must thank you... but acceptance is hard for us... SO hard... yet “Thy will be done.” We often say it. Help us to PRAY it!

Short Silence

O God, the searcher of hearts ... etc

3. Jesus falls for the First Time (Humankind falls under the Cross)

People in lonely rooms, in hospital wards, retirement homes, care homes, orphanages – fall by the wayside. Meanwhile, we have little time to spare, even those ‘working from home.’ So heaven help the person who falls. Woe-betide the ‘losers’ in the race for life! We are in the fast-lane, rushing towards death.

In this week we call ‘Holy’, on this Friday we call ‘good’:

Father, do not allow me to neglect those crushed under the cross they bear. Help me to support them and share in their pain. For with those who fall under the weight of their suffering, every day, in every place, it is your Son who falls...

Short Silence

O God, the searcher of hearts... etc

4. Jesus comes face to face with His Mother (to grow man needs self-giving love)

When love becomes possessive, it is flawed. It stunts growth. Men and women do not come to maturity, they remain fearful children.

But it is hard to stand by and see a child, a friend, a loved one follow the hard demands of the way of the Cross. Nevertheless, it is there...in the way to calvary that Mary repeats her ‘YES’ to God. There she expresses the love that accepts, supports, and reassures. The mutual love that knows the hard reality of mutual pain. The world-less love that simply is... supporting ... being there ...being...

In this week we call ‘Holy’, on this Friday we call ‘good’:

Grant us Lord, the grace to learn from her motherhood... how to become signs of your loving, supporting care, and so to be ‘worthy of the promises of Christ.’

Short Silence

O God, the searcher of hearts... etc

5. Simon of Cyrene takes up the Cross of Jesus

(sharing the weight of the Cross makes us brothers and sisters)

Being involved with others who bear the Cross is a risk. Bearing the Cross ourselves is even more of a risk, because it can be humiliating or unpopular. Far easier to dispense charity and good advice from a safe distance. We want clean, sanitized hands, and a good reputation...

Simon of Cyrene was forced to share the weight of Jesus' Cross. There was no choice for him - there is no choice for us.

In this week we call 'Holy', on this Friday we call 'good':

As your Son staggers to Calvary, we see that we are in your debt. We owe each other love – help us to choose to love, whatever the price may be...

Short Silence

O God, the searcher of hearts ... etc

6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus (seeking God's face)

Our life finds its meaning in the image of God. If we look for the face of Christ; indiscriminately; we too shall see, as Veronica saw, what he endures...

If we have the courage to walk with Christ, we will learn how to recognise him.

If we look at the deprived; the scorned; the sinful; the weak...

If we only look there – His face will shine out in our face.

Give us eyes to see Lord; re-create us in your image.

Short Silence

O God, the searcher of hearts ...etc

7. Jesus Falls for the Second Time (man is weighed down by weakness)

No-one feels loved enough. Everyone feels an indescribable inner loneliness at times; a rejection no word can explain. Sometimes entire nations are despised and wounded – as we trample those who are weaker than us...

Trapped in our own concerns, we are victims and persecutors all in one.

Each time we are overwhelmed by weakness, we need your healing power to stop us from tearing one another apart.

Where are you Lord, now that we need you?

Short Silence

O God, the searcher of hearts ...etc

8. Jesus meets the Women of Jerusalem (call to personal commitment)

Amongst the mocking throng... the women of Jerusalem showed pity and compassion. Always their task was to help the condemned; Give them drink, receive their pain, offer comfort and sympathy.

Yet Jesus draws them into the implications of his Cross, to share with all humankind the responsibility for the wrongdoings of humanity.

In the face of human injustice and greed, we too often take the easy path, with mere gestures of compassion which quieten our consciences - but distance us from any responsibility.

Jesus calls us to have courage, to open our eyes to the suffering of millions of innocent victims of man's pride and arrogance.

Jesus demands more from us than mere compassion. He calls us to more positive action.

Short Silence

O God, the searcher of hearts ... etc

9. Jesus falls again - For the Third Time

More people have died in warfare since the last world war than they did during it!

We cannot escape responsibility by blaming someone else for that. War is but one of the effects of our greed.

Must mankind's shared sin end in annihilation? Our Christian message of Hope for creation demands personal commitment, a life-long pursuit of Justice, and peace.

In this week we call 'Holy', on this Friday we call 'good':

Lord, transform our hearts of stone into warm hearts of flesh, before we let our world be poisoned and die.

Short silence

O God, the searcher of hearts ... etc

10. Jesus is stripped of His clothes

Once we were clothed in ignorance... and since its loss we have longed to cover ourselves again, to re-cover that beauty, that security, that was ours.

Soon we will be 'back to normal' we say. (Whatever that means?)

Mistakenly we turn to Things. Material things. Anything to make us secure...

But the essence of life is not what we have, but how we stand before God.

By measuring up things in terms of money or power we could cover up our true self.

And in order to be clothed like that, we may be stripping others?!

Short Silence

O God, the searcher of hearts ... etc

11. Jesus is nailed to the Cross

In everyone's life there comes the moment of truth. Suddenly *everything* seems to be a cross. Nothing has value, all is pointless, no song remains in the heart – only a formless cry, 'Why? Oh my God, Why?'

It is Job's cry, everyone's cry. It is ours, the Cross that Christ dies on; He is nailed with us; He is one with us...

When we enter the darkness, Christ shines on the pain of it, to bring us onwards, to our new dawn...

Short Silence

O God, the searcher of hearts ... etc

12. Jesus Dies. (and we face the mystery of death)

They offered him vinegar – sour wine. The wine pressed from the vintage of our toil. It is the bitter taste of the whole earth, the sweat from each of us, in every country, every continent. It is all we have.

All goodness comes from God. Yet God accepts the offering of our bitterness, as though it were an essential element to the Passion of Christ...

"It is accomplished" he says, and dies...

Man's 'bad' is mysteriously transformed into 'good'; a new measuring of love, infinitely full.

Death does not scare me Lord, but dying certainly does! All the pictures and reports of those suffering from Coronavirus fill me with anxiety, and sometimes I even feel panic for my family, for my friends, or for myself. Will I face death soon?

**In this week we call 'Holy', on this Friday we call 'good':
I believe, but Lord, help my unbelief.**

Short Silence

O God, the searcher of hearts ... etc

13. They take Jesus Down From The Cross

When evening came, Joseph of Arimathea went bravely to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

We have done away with you, Lord Christ, on an unjust charge. We have buried you among the wicked. Earth has made its opening. Now, reconciled and at peace, it takes the Just One into its womb. Patiently it cherishes him, and waits. It longs for new growth, the fruit of his resting in the ground.

**In this week we call 'Holy', on this Friday we call 'good':
Give us Lord, the gift of your death, so that we may enter into your endless life!**

Short Silence

O God, the searcher of hearts ... etc

'Drop, drop, slow tears' – Orlando Gibbons 1583-1625

**Drop, drop, slow tears,
And bathe those beauteous feet
Which brought from Heaven
The news and Prince of Peace.**

**Cease not, wet eyes,
His mercy to entreat;
To cry for vengeance
Sin doth never cease.**

**In your deep floods
Drown all my faults and fears;
Nor let His eye
See sin, but through my tears.**

14. Jesus lies buried in the Tomb. (Expecting new life)

Jesus lies in the ground – dead. Yet now the earth is pregnant with eternal life...
Lord of all hopes and freedom, like the grain of wheat, you fell and died for the life of us all.
When our hopes fail, give us courage, Risen Lord. When we feel cut-off, bring us back to the
newness of life. Life in all its fullness.

**In this week we call 'Holy', on this Friday we call 'good':
Help us to emerge from our tomb of security, which so often surrounds us, so that we
may in openness of heart, shine as radiant disciples of your love.**

Short Silence

Priest: O God, the searcher of hearts

**All: Help us to see ourselves in the light of your holiness; so that we may turn from our
sins, receive your grace and forgiveness, and learn to know, love and serve you better.
Amen!**

*It is now 3pm. The church funeral bell tolls thirty-three times
(representing each year of Our Lord on earth)*