

## TENEBRAE

(The lights are now extinguished)

### THE PASSION OF OUR LORD ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL OF MARK

READING 1: BETRAYAL AND ARREST OF JESUS Mark 14:32-50

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.'  
He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated.  
And he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.'  
And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible,  
the hour might pass from him.

He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me;  
yet, not what I want, but what you want.'

He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter,  
'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour?

Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial;  
the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.

And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy;  
and they did not know what to say to him.

He came a third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?  
Enough!

The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.' Immediately, while he was still speaking,  
Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs,  
from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders.

Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying,

'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.'

So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him.

Then they laid hands on him and arrested him.

But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest,  
cutting off his ear.

Then Jesus said to them, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me  
as though I were a bandit?

Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me.

But let the scriptures be fulfilled.'

All of them deserted him and fled.

***And once more he came and found them sleeping,***

***for their eyes were very heavy;***

***and they did not know what to say to him...***

***and they did not know what to say to him.***

Jesus has just celebrated the last supper with his disciples.

He has shared with them that he is going to be betrayed by one of them.

He has just shown them in a tangible way,

that his body is about to be broken,

and that his blood is about to be spilled for them, for us.

They will **not** betray him, Peter will **not** deny he knows Jesus,

and that he is one of Jesus followers.

Surely not them, surely not him.

They would do anything for Jesus, they would even die for him.

And yet with the best of intentions, only a few hours later,

They find themselves in the Garden of Gethsemane,

Jesus takes Peter James and John with him apart from the others,

His three closest friends, the three he first called to be disciples,

And Jesus asks of them, one simple thing

Not to fight to the death,

Not to join him in an uprising,

Not to stand up to the religious authorities,

Simply to stay awake while he prayed,

Just to be there with him...

But that one thing they could not do even for him.

I can not imagine how alone Jesus must have felt at that moment.

This is not a successful ministry moment.

One of his twelve has already gone to betray him,

His three closest friends keep falling asleep

while he wrestles with life and death,

following God's plan versus his human nature to survive.

I think the most poignant scene, is the second time Jesus comes

to Peter James and John and finds them asleep,

***And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy;***

***and they did not know what to say to him...***

What could they say to him?

No excuses will do, there are no excuses.

We wont desert you, we wont deny you, we wont betray you...

The best of intentions were there,

But what good are good intentions?

Jesus is betrayed, he is deserted by his friends, and they all flee,

And soon his Rock Peter will deny he ever knew Jesus.

***And the darkness begins to grow.***

***Extinguish a candle***

READING 2: JESUS BEFORE THE CHIEF PRIESTS Mark 14:53-65

They took Jesus to the high priest;

and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled.

Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest;

and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire.

Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none.

For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree.

Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying,

‘We heard him say, “I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.” ’

But even on this point their testimony did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, ‘Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?’

But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him,

‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’

Jesus said, ‘I am; and “you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power”, and “coming with the clouds of heaven.” ’

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said,

‘Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy!  
What is your decision?’

All of them condemned him as deserving death.

Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, ‘Prophecy!’

The guards also took him over and beat him.

First to the religious authorities.

After all, on the surface this appears to be a religious matter,

and it is the religious leaders who are trying to get rid of Jesus.

But there is confusion.

Some are saying that Jesus threatened to tear down the temple,

But he also threatened to rebuild it in three days.

What would they charge him with?

Vandalism.

But if he is going to rebuild the temple would it be

Renovating without a licence?

It seems as though there were a variety of people with a variety of accusations,

But unless at least two of them could agree,

There could be no charge.

Finally the High priest has had enough.

'Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?' The High Priest asks Jesus  
and Jesus replies with two simple words.

Jesus said, 'I am'

Those words are more than two simple words though,

Those words have been heard before,

Those words are a name,

Those two words also form the sacred name of God,

First said from the burning bush to Moses,

And repeated on the lips of Jesus.

"I am."

I am that I am, I have been what I have been, I will be what I will be,

I am God.

Not everyone would have necessarily heard the implication in Jesus words,

But obviously the high priest did,

And so did the other chief priests.

This Jesus was claiming the holy name of God,

"I am", which is the name Yahweh.

Oh yes the religious leaders certainly understood what Jesus had said,  
And after tearing his clothes, the High priest and all the chief priests agree  
that this Jesus is too dangerous, and must be put to death.

***And the darkness grows.***

***Extinguish the candle...***

READING 3: PETER DENIES JESUS

Mark 14:66-72

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by.  
When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said,

‘You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.’

But he denied it, saying, ‘I do not know or understand what you are talking about.’

And he went out into the forecourt.

Then the cock crowed.

And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders,

‘This man is one of them.’

But again he denied it.

Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter,

‘Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean.’

But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, ‘I do not know this man you are talking about.’

At that moment the cock crowed for the second time.

Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him,

‘Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ And he broke down and wept.

Poor Peter.

All the others have fled.

He fled too, but at least he has returned.

But why?

What can he possibly do to help Jesus now?

Who knows, but at least he is there in the High priest’s courtyard.

Waiting listening,

hoping for some news, warming himself by the fire where the gossip

leaks out from inside

news about what is happening to Jesus.

But Peter can’t blend in very well, he can’t hide.

He is big and cumbersome,

Apparently he looks like a Galilean, he looks like this Jesus fellow,

they come from the same neighbourhood.

The Servant girl has not missed this point.

‘You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.’

‘I do not know or understand what you are talking about.’

If **he** gets caught too now, what will happen?

He must do all he can to keep from getting caught.

Even lie if he must.

It is just a little lie, and it is for a greater good, Jesus would understand

**‘You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.’**

**‘I do not know or understand what you are talking about.’**

And with those words Peter tries to sneak away into another courtyard.

But the servant girl just won’t give it up,

and now she is getting the crowd, that fickle crowd in on it,

‘This man is one of them.’ She says to the crowd.

But again Peter denies knowing Jesus.

It is too late though.

The crowd has caught on to the idea too,

and will not let it go.

**‘Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean.’**

***But Peter began to curse, and he swore an oath,***

***‘I do not know this man you are talking about.’***

I am sure that before the words were out of his mouth,

his cursing, his vowing, his claim to never have met this Jesus...

I am sure that before the words were out of his mouth,

Peter realized what he had done.

At that moment the cock crowed for the second time.

Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him,

***‘Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.’***

And he broke down and wept.

Peter thought he was strong,

he thought he would not deny Jesus,

he thought he could stay awake,

he thought he could do something to help.

But with denial, with Peter’s lie, the darkness continues to grow.

***Extinguish another candle***

READING 4: JESUS SENTENCED TO DEATH Mark 15:1-15

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council.

They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate.

Pilate asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ He answered him, ‘You say so.’

Then the chief priests accused him of many things.

Pilate asked him again, ‘Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.’

But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked.

Now a man called arabas was in prison

with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection.

So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom.

Then he answered them, ‘Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?’

For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over.

But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead.

Pilate spoke to them again,

‘Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?’

They shouted back, ‘Crucify him!’

Pilate asked them, ‘Why, what evil has he done?’

But they shouted all the more, ‘Crucify him!’

So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them;

and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

How many things are done in this world to satisfy the crowd?

It is not the right thing to do,

but it is the popular thing to do.

At how many points in this account of Jesus crucifixion,  
could things have turned and gone a different way?

But it was God's will that Jesus should die right?

God had already pre-determined...

dare I say pre-destined that Jesus would die right?

What if...

What if God was waiting to see what the chief priests  
and the religious leaders would do?

And if one of them had risked being unpopular and said,

"No this is not right. Let us hear what this Jesus has to say."

What would have happened?

What if God was waiting to see what Judas would do,

Peter would do,

what the guards would do.

Even what Pilate would do?

What if it was not all pre-determined by God,

but God was allowing freewill and our human natures to take their course,  
and God would bring the best of the consequences?

What if?

Surely Pilate could have prevented this death.

He was the one holding the power.

He could have said,

"No, this man is innocent, I will not have him killed."

What if?

But Pilate was not interested in justice,

He wanted some semblance of peace.

And so he was happy to sacrifice this Jesus to the crowd,  
For a little peace.

And the crowd was happy, and Pilate was popular.

***So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, handed him over to be crucified.***

***And the darkness continues to grow,  
Extinguish another candle.***

READING 5: ROAD TO GOLGOTHA Mark 15:16-24

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters);  
and they called together the whole cohort.

And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown,  
they put it on him. And they began saluting him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'

They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him.

After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him.

Then they led him out to crucify him.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross;  
it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull).

And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it.

And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them,  
casting lots to decide what each should take.

I can't hear those words

without seeing the images of torture we see in our own time in the news,  
without remembering the pictures from Abugrabe prison,  
and the discussions about what are acceptable forms of torture  
and what are not.

Or without picturing the atrocities we have heard about this past month in Nigeria,  
or this past week in the Congo with the Lord's Resistance Army.

where people are mocked and tortured  
for the entertainment of those with power.

Human beings can be cruel,

And it is not something that just happened long ago,  
And we have evolved past it,

We have not evolved, we are still cruel today.

How does this happen?

How is it that we as human beings, can be so inhumane?

The soldiers brought out the whole cohort we are told,

That could be 300-600 soldiers to see this display of cruelty,

And it was not even 9 o'clock in the morning yet.

And they mocked Jesus, and spat at him, and dressed him up like a king,

And hit him in the head, and knelt down pretending to worship and honour him.

And all the while the crowd watched.

Faithful Jews, chief priests, Scribes, Pharisees, Roman soldiers.

All watching, all witnesses to these atrocities,

And all doing nothing to stop it.

But what could they do?

Human beings can be pretty inhumane,

And whenever I see the images from today on my T.V. screen,

I can not help but think of the line from the Celtic blessing

I sometimes use as a benediction.

May you see the face of Christ in everyone you meet,

And may everyone you meet see the face of Christ in you.

***And the darkness grows.***

***Extinguish another candle.***

READING 6: CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

Mark 15:25-32

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him.

The inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews.'

And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left.

Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying,

'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days,  
save yourself, and come down from the cross!'

In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes,

were also mocking him among themselves and saying,

'He saved others; he cannot save himself.'

Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now,  
so that we may see and believe.'  
Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

Could Jesus have been more alone at this moment?

In the company of thieves and bandits,

All the people passing by mocking him and taunting him.

You know that the Romans always chose a public place,  
a busy crossroad for crucifixions.

This way the most people possible would see who was being crucified.

And the charge would be put on a sign above their head,

so that anyone who was thinking of committing the same crime  
would be forewarned.

So there was Jesus at a man crossroad,

on the way into Jerusalem during Passover,

and what was his crime?

“The King of the Jews” the sign said.

Pilate must have liked this, after all it was his choice of inscription.

What a statement to the Jewish people during their Passover,  
of the power of Rome.

Here is what Rome does to anyone claiming to be a king in our imperial world.

The Jewish leaders much have liked this too.

Here is what happens when someone claims to be our king  
without our approval.

And they were all there mocking him.

Romans and Jewish leaders and common people.

Where is the crowd of less than a week ago?

Where are all the people who marched with Jesus while he rode the donkey

and they all shouted, Hosanna Son of David,

Save us now son of David,

Save us now we pray our Messiah.

Where are they now?

***'He saved others;'" they are saying "he cannot save himself.  
Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now,  
so that we may see and believe.'***

Betrayed, denied, abandoned, mocked, tortured.

How could this possibly be God's plan.

How could God possible bring something good out of this atrocity?

***And the darkness grows.  
Extinguish a candle***

READING 7: DEATH OF JESUS

Mark 15:33-39

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice,

'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means,

'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.'

And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.'

Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

***And the darkness grows,  
But still, a light shines in the darkness.***

**THE STRIPPING OF THE SANCTUARY**

**THE BENEDICTION**

**THE SILENT RECESSION**