

Manudy Thursday and Good Friday

Lent 6 Maundy Thursday

Morning Prayer

First Lesson: Jer 31:31-34

Second Lesson: John 13:18-38

Homily

It was the fateful night.
 Though they did not yet know it
 (except for the one who did),
 they were about to witness the arrest of their Lord,
 His abuse, His illegal trial,
 and His cruel execution on a cross.
 He gathered them together,
 where things were prepared for a meal,
 for a meal in remembrance of the Covenant
 that God had made so long ago
 with His chosen people.
 They sat together for the timeless ritual.
 the thanksgiving for the liberation
 of an oppressed people from their bondage,
 celebrating in a country that once again
 was in bondage to a foreign oppressor.

There was a deeper bondage
 that they, perhaps, did not have in mind,
 a bondage to sin and condemnation,
 to an evil that was within themselves,
 and from which they could not flee.
 At that meal he gave them the bread and the cup,
 calling them His Body and Blood,
 and declaring in them a New Covenant,
 an inward Covenant,
 such as was announced so long ago
 by the Prophet Jeremiah.
 He knelt before them, washed their feet,
 and declared Himself their servant,
 a service he was about to seal in His death.
 One of them left to betray Him.

He led the rest to a garden to pray,
 and they could not keep awake to pray with Him.
 The arrest came.
 One of them betrayed Him,
 as He knew it would be.
 One of them shortly denied Him,
 just as He had said he would.
 The rest of them hid in fear.
 They were in bondage.
 They needed a Savior.

That night and the next day

they watched (or heard from a distance)
 as He underwent horror after horror,
 a cruel and illegal trial by night,
 two more trials, both before King Herod
 and before the governor Pilate.

The crowds jeered.
 The soldiers beat Him,
 and, at last they nailed Him to a cross.
 He died, and was buried.

They cringed out of sight,
 all but John the beloved and the women,
 they cowered, helpless,
 despairing,
 forgetting all the hope He had spoken.
 They had none.
 They were still in bondage.
 They needed a Savior,
 and though they did not know it,
 and though they could not believe it,
 they had one.

He was dying to set them free.
 He would rise to lead them on,
 to a work they could not do on their own,
 and to an everlasting life they could not earn.

In that meal and at that Cross,

though they did not know and could not see,
 victory lay before them.
 They had a Savior.
 So do we.

Let us pray.

I believe, O Lord, and I confess,
 that thou art in very truth,
 The Christ, the Son of the living God,
 who didst come into the world to save sinners,
 of whom I am chief.
 Grant that I not betray you, like Judas,
 with a kiss,
 nor deny you like Peter,
 but that I may boldly confess thy Cross,
 and, when next I may, approach thy Table,
 with boldness unto everlasting life. Amen.

Lent 6 - Maundy Thursday

Evening Prayer

First Lesson: Lam 3:40-58

Second Lesson: John 17

Homily

Our two lessons today are very similar and yet quite different.

They are similar in that both of them are heartfelt, fervent prayers, but they are quite distinct, both in the identity of the one praying, and in what is being prayed for.

Jeremiah prays on behalf of the sinning soul, or, perhaps better, on behalf of a straying people, a people he would have known as Judah, but which we see clearly as the Church of God. His prayer is our prayer, the prayer we must pray, before we can pray any other. It is from the viewpoint of a sinner, a sinner, moreover that knows he has offended, that has no doubt as to the rightness of God's will,

nor as to the wrongness of his own actions, and accepts the essential justice and rightness of the punishment that sin deserves.

He cries out,
not with self-justification,
not with complaining,
not with demands for special treatment,
but with deep and abiding sorrow.
But that prayer does not end in despair,
but with an assurance that the One who judges,
the One whose punishment is just,
is also the One who loves and hears.

*"I called upon thy name, O LORD,
out of the low dungeon.*

*Thou hast heard my voice:
hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.
Thou drewest near
in the day that I called upon thee:
thou saidst, Fear not.
O LORD, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul;
thou hast redeemed my life."*

So must we come before Him,
for we all have sinned,
and we all deserve the worst,
we ourselves as individuals,

for we all have sinned;
 and we ourselves as a church,
 for when has the Church of God
 been completely faithful to her almighty Lord?
 God is loving, God is merciful,
 we can come before Him trusting in that mercy,
 and we can know that it is granted,
 but, as we stand on the threshold of Good Friday,
 we need to think upon the reasons
 for the tremendous and fear-inspiring events
 of that black and blessed day.
 We are the reason,
 nothing more or less than that,
 and all that He endured, he endured
 as love's answer to our provocation.

And now, on the night before He suffered,
 after the Supper at which He fed His men
 with Himself, His own Body and Blood,
 Jesus prayed a prayer we cannot pray.
 As God, He prays to God,
 both glorifying Him and being glorified,

 presenting Himself in a death that cannot be,
 and yet will certainly come,
 He glorifies the Father,
 and claims the glory as of the Only-begotten,
 a glory to be expressed on the Cross

and revealed in the Resurrection.
 And, in the solemnity of that moment,
 His prayer is for us,
 to whom He has made known the Name of God,
 whom He has called by that Name,
 whom He has claimed for His own,
 as the gift of the Father.
 And what does He pray for us?

*"That they all may be one;
 as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee,
 that they also may be one in us:
 that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. "*

Unity with one another, and with God,
 a unity like that between Father and Son,
 a gift as far beyond the perfection of Eden
 as eternity is beyond time.

*"And the glory which thou gavest me
 I have given them;
 that they may be one, even as we are one: "*

He prays that for us,
 and we,
 we have continued to squabble among ourselves,
 to divide over small things,
 to let ourselves become
 Roman and Orthodox and Anglican,

and all the kinds of Protestant that there are.
Unity is his desire.

Division, it would seem, is ours.
Can we not hear Him?
Can we not, all of us, follow Him?
We cannot pray His prayer,
it is the prayer of God unto God,
but we can, on this holy night,
remembering the one Meal to which
He has called all who will be saved,
join with Him,
as He prays for us.

Let us pray,

O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only
Saviour, the Prince of Peace; give us grace seriously
to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our
unhappy divisions. Take away, all hatred and
prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from
godly union and concord: that as there is but one
Body and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling,
one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and
Father of us all, so may we be all of one heart and of
one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace,
of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one
mouth glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Lent 6 - Good Friday

Morning Prayer

First Lesson: Gen 22:1-18

Second Lesson: John 18

Homily

Good Friday?

Why would we call it that?

How good is it to be thinking
about a dreadful death by crucifixion?

Well, in the first place it's actually from
"God's Friday",
and that it was, far above all other Fridays.
But the label we give it is right after all,
for it was a supreme and wonderful
good thing that Jesus did for us that day.

He had met with His disciples the night before.
He had shared with them the Passover meal,
declaring that this was indeed
His Body and His Blood..
In so doing He had offered Himself as a Sacrifice,
and offering now about to be made on the Cross.

The first lesson takes us back to a type,
or foreshadowing of this great sacrifice.
Abraham is told to offer his own son
as a burnt offering.

He and the lad climb that long hill,
erect an altar,
and prepare everything for the sacrifice.

*"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father,
and said,
... where is the lamb for a burnt offering?
And Abraham said, My son,
God will provide himself a lamb
for a burnt offering..."*

And so He did.
Abraham made the offering God had required,
but God provided a substitute.
A ram appeared and was offered in the boy's place.
The sacrifice was performed,
and father and son returned together
from the mount.
So it is that we, by our sins,
have amply earned the death penalty,
and the sentence indeed has been carried out,
but by the Substitute that God provided,
and we return alive -- alive forever.

There is another type offered us by St. John,

one not so often remarked upon,
often, in fact, passed over without comment,
but no less clear and vivid.

There was a man named Barabbas.
Well, "Bar" is the Aramaic word for "son",
and "Abba" is Aramaic for "father",
and thus, in the language they all spoke,
his name meant "Son of the father".

Barabbas was a criminal,
justly condemned to death.
Whether he was a revolutionary
or a common robber,
he had killed in defiance of the law,
and had been sentenced to crucifixion.
This "son" was released,
and the true Son of the true Father,
died in his place,
a sacrifice for his sins and for ours.

Good Friday?

Indeed it is.

We are sinners, all of us.

We are deserving of any condemnation
that God should choose to give us
To refrain from condemning us
would be to tolerate sin,
but sin is such an ugliness
that it cannot be excused or tolerated.

We just don't truly know how horrible sin really is.
God, while unwilling to excuse such a horror,
love humanity enough that He was and is
unwilling to condemn us all out of hand.
The Cross demonstrates both the ugliness of sin
and the incredible lengths
to which God's love will go.
The sacrifice was offered.
The death sentence was satisfied.
The love was demonstrated --
all in the amazing gift of His own Son,
the eternal Word of God,
offered and received on that Cross,
on that Friday,
that Good Friday,
and by that Cross and Passion,
we are saved.

Let us pray.

O Saviour of the world, who by thy Cross and
precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us and help
us, we Humbly beseech thee, O Lord
We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our
hearts; that, as we have known the incarnation of thy
Son Jesus Christ by the message of an Angel, so by
his cross and passion we may be brought unto the
glory of his resurrection; through the same Jesus
Christ our Lord. Amen.

Alternate First Lesson: Wisdom 2:1, 12-24

(though this lesson is appointed as an alternate to the one from Genesis above, and is certainly appropriate to the day, no homily has been provided if it should be used)

Lent 6 - Good Friday

Evening Prayer

First Lesson: Isa 52:13-53:12

Second Lesson: 1 Peter 2:11-25

Homily

(Since the First Lesson is the same as in the second set of lessons for Palm Sunday MP, the following is a slightly changed version of the homily given there.)

This is Good Friday.

The events we consider today
followed so soon after the triumphant entrance
of Jesus into Jerusalem,

but thoughts of that are long behind us

You see, the cheering crowds
were looking for a conquering king.

They hoped that this man had come
to take arms and drive the Romans out.

Yes, it was the entrance of a King,
but what kind of King?

An entrance into what?

and for what purpose?

We heard that bone-chilling passage from Isaiah,
the one where he asks

"Who hath believed our report?"

Who indeed? Surely not the cheering crowds.

They certainly did not have in mind

a man of sorrows and grief,

one who bore their griefs, sorrows, and sins,

one who was stricken, smitten of God,

and afflicted --- for them.

It was a hoped-for conqueror they cheered,
and the prophets words were strange to them,
strange and ignored.

"Who hath believed our report?"

Not the apostles.

Right up until the very moment
the refused to believe what Christ Himself
said about his impending death.

"Who hath believed our report?"

One woman did,
probably not the most reputable of women.
She knew who He was,
and brought precious oils to anoint Him,
an action dreadfully confusing to His hosts,
and even to His followers,

especially when He said,
*"in that she hath poured this ointment on my body,
 she did it for my burial. "*

The entrance of Palm Sunday
 looked like a triumphant entrance,
 the coming of a conquering King,
 and so it ultimately was,
 but it was an entrance into fearful suffering,
 painful betrayal, an unjust trial,
 the heaping of shame upon the Innocent One,
 and a horrible death.

The time was drawing near.
 He celebrated Passover with His friends.
 He gave them His own Body and Blood,
 the seal of that soon-to-be-offered Sacrifice.
 He went to the garden to pray with them,
 and they failed him there.
 He was arrested, and they ran and hid.
 The boldest of His disciples quaked in fear,
 and denied knowing Him.

"Who hath believed our report?"
 asked Isaiah.

Have we? Have we really?
 Do we know the consequences of our own sin?

Do we look at the crucifix and remember why?
 Are we prepared to follow Him
 as though we know the cost?
 Or do we expect that things will be easy?
 Do we want a faith that does everything for us,
 and doesn't cost?

Let us pray

Ah, Holy Jesus, how hast thou offended,
 that man to judge thee hath in hate pretended?
 By foes derided, by thine own rejected,
 O most afflicted.

Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon thee?
 Alas, my treason, Jesus hath undone thee.
 "Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee"
 I crucified thee. Amen.