

## Reflection for Good Friday 2020

**Text: John 19: 22-25** When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.' This was to fulfil what the scripture says, 'They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots,' and that is what the soldiers did.

(Note this reflection is based on the account given in John's gospel Chapter's 18 & 19)

There was so much touching on Good Friday; so many hands involved as our Lord was brought to His death on that cross, that instrument of torture; brought to a death designed to erase Him from the pages of history; designed to ensure that no longer would it be possible for His hands to reach out to touch those who came to Him for healing, for comfort, for reassurance that they were cared for and loved.

First there were the rough hands of the guards seizing hold of him in that night dark garden. Hands that held with a bruising force as they tightly bound Jesus before leading Him away to the false accusations and blinded, prejudiced questioning of first Annas and then Caiaphas. Hands that pushed and shoved as He stumbled His impotent way back to Jerusalem across the Kidron valley. And now His 'trial' in front of Annas where powerless to defend Himself he is viciously struck in the face by one of the police. How many innocent victims down the centuries how found themselves, like Jesus, insensitively and callously manhandled and brutally struck in the face of corrupt and evil powers?

And so, the touches of hatred, anger, prejudice envy, of self- preservation continue as He is dragged before Pilate, dragged in front of the braying crowd yelling senselessly for His blood. and then subjected to the flailing strikes of lead tipped whips where each touch drew blood and excoriated that naked back. Next the mockery of the soldiers; the crown made of vicious penetrating thorns rammed down upon His head to anoint Him, not with oil, but His own blood. Then with sentence pronounced He is forced to bear the weight of His own cross bearing down on that raw, bloodied back; forced to bear all the pain of that inanimate touch before experiencing the agonising feel of being pinned helplessly to that same cross and lifted up on high so that most of those who watched could jeer and mock untouched, unmarked by any hint of pity or compassion. Oh yes, there can be no doubt there was more than enough touching that day; touching of the most unfeeling and callous nature; touching that revealed the basest

and most vindictive, most destructive instincts of humanity; touching without a shred of the love that Jesus had preached throughout His life

Meanwhile beneath those three crosses four soldiers, inured and hardened against the suffering men hoisted above them, greedily, acquisitively touched Christ's garments and divided them between them. And then there was the question of the robe; who should have that? The solution to bring out the dice, to handle them, jingle them shake them in those rough hands, hands which had dealt pain and rough justice to so many nameless victims. And then as they shook those dice in the way most calculated to call down Lady they made their throw confident that they must be the one fortunate enough to acquire this seamless garment. How strange that a simple pastime designed for amusement and pleasure should be played out against a pastime which is still shamefully engaged in this very day; a pastime of physical and mental punishment and torture that displays the most abhorrent, most atrocious, most horrific, totally unfeeling capacity for evil. A pastime that in all its degradation reveals the capacity for man's inhumanity to man.

And what about us this Good Friday what are we engaged in? Have we allowed the immensity of the uninhibited cruelty of that day to cause us to fall to our knees or bow our heads in sorrow and shame and in abject acknowledgement of our own contribution to all the blows that fell upon Christ that first Good Friday? Our hatreds and our prejudices, our self-seeking and our blinkered outlook, our unbridled envies and petty jealousies, our unfettered greed and lust, have these too been struck across the helpless body of our Lord? And in making such a recognition, in facing the truth of our own marred humanity have we also felt, almost with disbelief, the extraordinary touch of Christ's love as He gazes down from the cross in forgiveness and absolution?

Or, have we turned away from all the horror and mindless cruelty not wanting such a scene to impinge upon us and upset us; turned away from the blood because we cannot bear or tolerate such a sight and ignored it all just as those soldiers did? Are we seeking out other amusements to distract us and help us pretend that all is well in the world? Other amusements which help us close our eyes to the truth of the cross and the truth also that today there will be thousands of acts of cruelty and persecution inflicted upon the innocent and blameless.

For many Good Friday in past years has simply been a day to have off, to consume a mountain of hot cross buns and to purchase a few more Easter eggs with which to stuff oneself and such services as there have been in churches have been less and less well attended. This year of

course the pattern will be quite different but, the question remains for us how will we spend it? Will we stand, however hard it may be beside Mary and the beloved disciple not taking our eyes away from the suffering Christ or will we distract ourselves with pastimes that ensure the agonising but ultimate truth that lies at the heart of the Passion Story does not touch us?

So God loved the world, that He gave His only- begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

**The Broken Vase** Nick Fawcett

It was broken,  
shattered beyond repair,  
no way anyone could put it together again,  
however hard they might try.

The damage was too great  
and the pieces too small,  
the vase beyond redemption.

I forget, Lord, too easily, that your Son was also broken:  
that what he went through was no play-acting  
or sleight of hand,  
but suffering as real and terrible as I can imagine,  
endured until life was blotted out,  
seemingly ended for good.

Teach me to remember that truth,  
but to remember also that brokenness was not the end,  
for from death came life,  
from despair, hope  
and from sorrow, joy-  
your love bringing new beginnings.

And remind me, above all,  
that this same love is still at work,  
able to take broken people,  
broken lives,  
and make them whole.