

The Passion According To Matthew.

Each reading and short reflection should be followed by music and/or silence. Images and symbols can also be used. It can be very effective to extinguish a candle at the end of each meditation.

Reading 1: Matthew twenty seven: 1-10.

Meditation: 30 Silver Coins.

Such a price. Thirty silver coins, the price of a field, but not even a useful field, but more of a dump really, a dump strewn with the remnants of broken pots and useless clay, the potters field.

And this was the value they put on Jesus, the value they put on Jesus death. Yes his death, not his life, his life to them was not worth anything, not even this, but his death? Well yes that had its value, that had its benefits.

Thirty silver coins scattered on the temple floor, and the anguished cry of a man who is destined to die. Not Jesus, no, but Judas, Judas Iscariot, Son of Simon Iscariot, the man who for thirty silver coins, and with a kiss, betrayed Jesus into the hands of a blood thirsty mob.

This man too dies, wracked with pain and guilt and shame, tortured with the knowledge of his own foolishness, his own stupidity. Judas dies with a broken heart. Broken by thirty pieces of silver, the price of the potter's field.

"I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood."

Lord, have mercy,
Christ, have mercy,
Lord, have mercy.

Reading 2: Matthew twenty seven, eleven to twenty six.

Meditation: A bowl of Water.

A man tries desperately to wash away the evidence of his crime. The blood stained fingers, the dirty clothes, all can be washed, all evidence can be destroyed. The clock can be turned back, everything can be restored, just as it was rather than as it is, or so he thinks. But innocence? O no, innocence, that is not quite so simple. The evidence may be removed, the guilt however remains, remains like a stain to reappear and destroy the illusion of innocence that can only be so thin and so fragile.

And yet in the deepest of ironies, this blood that Pilate so desperately seeks to wash his hands of is the blood of innocence. Not just the blood of an innocent man, but the blood of innocence, the blood through which innocence has come into the world. The blood that can wash us in our very depths, wash us in the very core of our beings, washing and cleansing, not to cover or hide our guilt, but to take it from us, to

swill it away like so much dirty dish water, and to leave us, to leave you and me, clean, washed, innocent to the core.

This blood whose stain Pilate so eagerly washes from his hands, we so eagerly seek to be washed in, we so eagerly seek to be stained with, for we are washed, we are sanctified, we are justified by the blood of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Lord, have mercy,
Christ, have mercy,
Lord, have mercy.

Reading 3: Matthew 27:27-31.

Meditation: The Demons Dance.

The Demons dance, the deed is done, the prisoner is chained, the moment of celebration has come, for surely nothing now stands in the way. The fool is the victim of his own foolishness.

The King of the Jews? Bah! look at him now, what is there Kingly in this broken wretch? Hah! Weak and broken, he who claimed he could break the demon's power, now held in satan's iron grip. Powerless, bound with iron fetters, submitting to this dance of demonic fury. Head bowed, hands hanging limp, he is defeated, or so they think.

The Demons dance, the deed is done, the prisoner is chained, the moment of celebration has come, for surely nothing now stands in the way. The fool is the victim of his own foolishness.

Lord, have mercy,
Christ, have mercy,
Lord, have mercy.

Reading 4: Matthew 27:32-44.

Meditation: An Entertaining Diversion.

How could they be so blind? How could his cry fall on such deaf ears? What manner of cruelty is this, that people could sit and watch the life blood drain from his body?

The cry of pain and anguish as nails are driven, carefully driven. Yes we want this man to die but not yet, not too quickly, for his suffering is what we really want. Once he is dead we will turn away, once he is dead we will forget, once he is dead we will go and find something else to entertain and amuse us. But now? Now it is entertainment enough, after all, another's misfortune is our reward, another's suffering is our pleasure.

But as with mocking stares they watch his life blood drain away, it is they who die. It is their life that ebbs and turns, it is they that slip from light to darkness, from life to death. It is they, and not he, for whom all is lost.

Lord, have mercy,
Christ, have mercy,
Lord, have mercy.

Reading 6: Matthew 27:45-54.

Meditation: Rest.

Rest now, the suffering is over, the burden is carried, the pain slowly ebbs away. The cruel world with its jeering crowds and spitting hatred slowly fades, and peace is yours.

Rest now for your task is accomplished, all has been done, and done so well, so perfectly. "Sleep, child sleep," whispers the Father. "Rest, rest, for nothing can harm you now."

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Reading 7: Matthew 27:55-61.

Meditation: Alleluia.

All Heaven stands in silence. All heads are bowed, all too grieved to look, all is silent, all is still. And yet a wonder fills the air, a thrilling sense of reason, a magical sense of completeness. And in the silence a lone voice is heard to utter a faltering: "Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia."

Alleluia, for here has been seen the glory of God.
Alleluia, for here has been seen the depth of God.
Alleluia, for here has been seen the heart of God.
Alleluia, for here has been seen the love of God.
Love in all of its fullness, love in all of its purity, Love in all of its perfection.
The outstretched arms of love.

Alleluia, for this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

And slowly the faltering Alleluias are echoed across the vast expanse of the heavens. Alleluia, Alleluia.

And each voice in a sorrow filled joy, calls to another, Alleluia, Alleluia,
Until the heavens ring, ring with wonder, ring as they did on the night of his birth, for in this moment all has been accomplished, all has been finished, all is made complete, all is as it should be.

Alleluia, Lord, have mercy,
Alleluia, Christ, have mercy,
Alleluia, Lord, have mercy.

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