

Scripture, prayer, veneration, and communion.

The 4 parts of Good Friday.

Scripture, prayer, veneration, and communion.

Scripture starts with Abraham and Isaac on the mountain,
a kind of forerunner to the story of God and his Son at Golgotha.

But mainly scripture means the Passion,
the record of our rejection of the Son of God.

The crucifixion is a kind of perverted sacrament,
an outward and physical sign of our inward and spiritual brokenness.

Crucifixion was our way of telling Jesus and the world
that his identity and his ideas are lies.

But before we made this perverse sacrament of nailing his body to the cross,
first we tried to break his spirit.

We betrayed him. Judas with a kiss. Pilate by ignoring justice.
The disciples by running away. Peter betrayed him 3 times.
All of us betrayed him by calling for his death.

Betrayal tries to make you lose your belief in yourself.
Betrayal tries to make you doubt who you are, and who you can trust.

We betrayed Jesus in order to try and take away his belief
in who he is and what he was here to do.



After betraying him, we humiliated him.

We arrested him on false charges, beat him, ridiculed him,
spat on him, and treated him like a piece of trash.

Being humiliated creates a pain in you that doesn't know how to get out.

Rage will explode out. Sadness will seep out.

But humiliation tells you if you say anything it'll just get worse.

These days, especially, we like to humiliate people.

It's how we beat them down and keep them down
even after we've moved on.

We betrayed and humiliated Jesus because killing him wasn't enough.

We wanted him to be filled with self-loathing.

We wanted him and his followers to say he was wrong,
to say he was a fool and a liar.

But we failed.

God's ultimate victory over death is coming on Easter morning,
but there is still to be found on THIS day a kind of victory.

Because when Jesus cried out in pain,
he did not cry out for vengeance.

Because when Jesus cried out to God,
even from the cross he knew that his Father was listening.



Prayer.

Our response to the Passion is an ancient pattern of prayer
called the Solemn Collects.

When we consider the world's brokenness, our brokenness,
our first response...is thoughts and prayers.

We see a lot of mockery of thoughts and prayers,
even from our fellow Christians.

On one hand I know what they're really saying.
On the other hand, I know what they're really saying.

They say thinking is an excuse for not doing.
They say prayer doesn't do anything.

But Christians think.

They think deeply about the needs of the world,
and then they pray. And then they act.

After a little music to settle our minds, we'll pray slowly and deeply.
During the silence, don't try to pray pretty.

Pray with simple words for the church all over the world.

Pray for the nations and their leaders.

Pray for the suffering.

Pray for those who do not know the Lord of love.

And then, only then, pray for yourselves.

It'll take a few minutes and it should,
because the first response to our betrayal and humiliation of Jesus
is deep, soulful, Christ-like prayer for the world.



Veneration.

We bring out a big wooden cross and invite you to venerate
the instrument of death by which Christ redeems the world.

I hope all of you today will venerate the cross of Christ.

Not that we'll do it the same.

Some will kneel before the cross, a few might even lie on the floor before it.
Others kiss the cross or bring up the nail they took on Ash Wednesday.

Some kneel at their pew.

Or sit with a still body and just go quiet. There is no formula.

Do what you need to do to bring your heart
to what you have heard and prayed.

“We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.”



What would it take to be transformed on this day?

What would it take to become Christ to the world?

You have heard the Passion, you have responded with prayer,
you have strengthened your resolve with veneration.

Only one thing is left -

to take the body and blood of the one you adore into your own body.

On this Good Friday, we take the body and blood of our Lord into ourselves.

Because even though we are commanded to love the Lord our God
with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength,
and to love our neighbor as ourselves,
history and this Good Friday have shown us
that we are not good or faithful or strong enough
to do it on our own.

No matter how much scripture we read or how deeply we pray or venerate,
we are not good or faithful or strong enough
to be Christ to the world by ourselves.

Thanks be to God, we aren't expected to.

Instead we are invited to take into our bodies
the flesh and the spirit of the very one we try to follow.

Remember that the flesh we will eat was both killed AND resurrected.
Remember that the blood we will drink was both spilled and raised.

We serve the RISEN Christ,
whose body still bears the scars of our betrayal.



So sit and ponder what it means to proclaim Christ crucified and risen.

It's not about doctrine. It's not about liturgy.

It's about deciding whether you want to give your life over to a mystery,
the mystery that somehow Jesus and God are one,
that somehow Jesus died for our sins,
and that somehow life is different because of it.

If that mystery resonates within you - you don't have to have the answers -
if it **RESONATES** within you, give yourself to this moment.

You could be Christ to the world: a healer, a prophet, a friend.

If it doesn't resonate with you today,
then maybe all this is just chaff for you right now.
Or hopefully a handful of seeds planted for later.

We proclaim Christ crucified and risen. Ponder what that means.
Sometimes...sometimes...it causes me to tremble.