

## Good Friday – Parish Service – 18<sup>th</sup> April 2014

John 18: 1 – 19: 42 “The events of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus”

### Introduction

It is truly amazing that we are here remembering the death on a cross of a Jewish rabbi, at the hands of Roman overlords, over two thousand years ago. That this familiar scene of its day hasn't been lost, forgotten or given up on is remarkable. Around the world this gruesome account of execution is replayed as the differing time zones bring into being the moment of listening to the story again and we with tens of millions of Christians pay homage to the one mockingly called “King of the Jews”, who was humiliated, stripped, carried his own death symbol and then placed upon it.

“Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull.

Here they crucified him.”

It appears nonsensical to non-Christians what as Christians we are remembering today. Our Lord and Saviour, crucified, dead and buried. It appears the end and yet we still gather as a people of hope.

### Setting

Last Sunday, we heard the account of Jesus coming into Jerusalem on the donkey in peace. We heard also the fictitious summary from Borg and Crossan of Pontius Pilate entering into Jerusalem on his war horse with his troops to keep civil order during the Passover to maintain Roman power. It is in this context that we again have the amazing contrast within the passage pitting the power of the worldly kingdoms with God's power. This clearly comes out in Pilate's discussion with Jesus over Pilate's question to him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” (vs 33b)

Jesus doesn't initially answer Pilate but goes on then to talk about his kingdom.

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But my kingdom is from another place.”

“You are a king then!” said Pilate.

Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” (vss 36-37)

There is this clear contrast between military power and control over people to maintain the empire over against the spiritual, God given, peaceful kingdom that Jesus ushers in. The ‘truth’ spoken of here is God's truth revealed through the prophets of old and fulfilled in Jesus himself. It is part of the thinking of that time that truth can come from God if people are open to that Spirit of Truth or they follow the worldly ways seeking alternate truth, thought then to be from the Devil. Probably not much has changed in our thinking except we tend to use different terminology.

However Pilate, like many today, does not understand what Jesus is talking about. He doesn't have the spiritual insight to look deeper at what is being shared with him.

However, he clearly sees nothing wrong with Jesus and says to the crowd, “I find no basis for a charge against him.” (vs 38b)

Pilate, governing the province, however wants to keep the peace and the crowd yelling at him, “Crucify, crucify him,” prevails.

### The Challenge

Into this context we come to worship today still seeing the conflict between the ways and power of the world over against the ways of Christ. For us it is so easy to say, "Hey we would never let our worldliness trump our faith," yet we do in a host of ways knowingly and unknowingly.

I found this meditation written by Chris Polhill in the book, "Eggs and Ashes" – Practical and Liturgical resources for Lent and Holy Week. (pp198/199). His words say what I am thinking but in a far more powerful way.

### At the Cross

I see Christ crucified still – today: where the hungry cry for food, die for food, though there's plenty. Where people are yelled at, jeered at – bricks through their windows because their skin isn't white, isn't right.

Where abuse and rape occur, where gay men and women are beaten up, where lust kills love - I see him crucified still.

I see Christ crucified still – today: where wars scar people, lands, God's hands – the endless, killing politics of hate. Where the cry for justice is unheard, oppressed, beaten down by cold, world systems.

Where power comes first, where religion twists faith, where fear kills trust – I see him crucified still.

I see Christ crucified still – today: where creation's fabric shreds, is bled, by 'must have now', 'must use'. Where earth's beauty is destroyed.

Where trees burn, where water poisons, where greed kills need –  
I see him crucified still.

And I try – a little – to stem the deadly tide as I give - a little, write to those in power – a little, take my bottles for recycling, and try to love as he said; try to love and change – a little.

O God, for all these crucifixions may there one day be resurrection and may we experience some of that joy.

### Conclusion

We don't usually have an offering on Good Friday but I wondered if we might today. During this week we heard of the vandalism of the Islamic Centre with an estimated cost of some \$200,000 clean-up and repair bill. On a day when we remember the lengths that God would go to show his love for us, it seems appropriate that we extend love and care to people of another faith within our Canberra community. As we pray the prayers of intercession for silent prayer, printed as the insert in the Order of Service) let us add to our prayers the other faith communities and particularly the Islamic community and offer them some practical care as well. Our free-will offering today will be for supporting the clean-up and repair of the Islamic Centre in Monash.