

# **Notre Dame University Australia**

**Fremantle, Western Australia.**

## **The Way of The Cross.**

### **Good Friday Stations Of The Cross**

#### **Readings & Meditations**

#### **For Each Station**

**Adapted from St Mary's Seminary, Mulgrave, Victoria.**

**With new reflections from Fr Ron Rolheiser OMI [www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com)**

**Scripture readings are taken from the Jerusalem Bible, copyright 1966 by  
Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., & Doubleday and Company Inc. Used by permission (implied).**

**Layout & Images © The University of Notre Dame Australia, 2009.**

**Reflections © Fr Ron Rolheiser OMI, 2002-2009.**

**Prayer Parts © The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, 1999.**

**Original Copy: Lent, 2009**

**Last Updated: Lent, 2009**

## The Ninth Station – Jesus Nailed To The Cross.

**L:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**P:** *Because, by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

---

**1<sup>st</sup> Reader:**            **Scripture Reading: (Luke 23:33-34)**

---

When they reached the place called The Skull, they crucified him there and the two criminals also, one on the right, the other on the left. Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing'. Then they cast lots to share out his clothing.

---

**Meditation: R Rolheiser OMI - The Cross as Revealing the Passion (24-02-2002)**

---

We speak of one section of the Gospels, that which narrates Jesus' life from the Last Supper until his death and burial, as chronicling his "Passion". On Good Friday, the lector begins the Gospel reading with the words: "The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to John".

Why do we call Jesus' suffering just before his death his passion? Generally this is not properly understood. We tend to think that "passion" here refers to intense sufferings, as in "passionate suffering". This is not wrong, but misses a key point. Passion comes from the latin, PASSIO, meaning passiveness, non-activity, absorbing something more than actively doing anything. The "Passion" of Jesus refers to that time in his life where his meaning for us is not defined by what he was doing but rather by what was being done to him. What is being said here?

The public life and ministry of Jesus can be divided into two distinct parts: Scholars estimate that Jesus spent about three years preaching and teaching before being put to death. For most of that time, for all of it in fact except the last day, he was very much the doer, in command, the active one, teaching, healing, performing miracles, giving counsel, eating with sinners, debating with church authorities, and generally, by activity of every sort, inviting his contemporaries into the life of God. And he was busy. He is described at times as being so pressured by people that he didn't even have time to eat. For almost all of his public life Jesus was actively doing something.

However, from the time he walked out of the last supper room and began to pray in Gethsemane, that activity stops. He is no longer the one who is doing things for others, but the one who is having things done to him. In the garden, they arrest him, bind his hands, lead him to the high priest, then to Pilate. He is beaten, humiliated, stripped of his clothes, and eventually nailed to a cross where he dies. This constitutes his "passion", that time in his life and ministry where he ceases to be the doer and becomes the one who has things done to him.

What is so remarkable about this is that our faith teaches us that we are saved more through his passion (his death and suffering) than through all of his activity of preaching and doing miracles. How does this work?

Allow me an illustration: Ten years ago, my sister, Helen, an Ursuline nun, died of cancer. A nun for more than thirty years, she much loved her vocation and was much loved within it. For

most of those thirty years, she served as a den-mother to hundreds of young women who attended an academy run by her order. She loved those young women and was for them a mother, an older sister, and a mentor. For the last twenty years of her life, after our own mother died, she also served in that same capacity for our family, organizing us and keeping us together. Through all those years she was the active-one, the consummate-doer, the one that others expected to take charge. She relished the role. She loved doing things for others.

Nine months before she died, cancer struck her brutally and she spent the last months of her life bed-ridden. Now things needed to be done for her and to her. Doctors, nurses, her sisters in community, and others, took turns taking care of her. And, like Jesus from the time of his arrest until the moment of his death, her body too was humiliated, led around by others, stripped, prodded, and stared at by curious passers-by. Indeed, like Jesus, she died thirsty, with a sponge held to her lips by someone else.

This was her passion. She, the one who had spent so many years doing things for others, now had to submit to having things done to her. But, and this is the point, like Jesus, she was able in that period of her life, when she was helpless and no longer in charge, to give life and meaning to others in a deeper way than she could when she was active and doing so many things for others.

There's great lesson in this, not the least of which is how we view the terminally ill, the severely handicapped, and the sick. There's a lesson too on how we might understand ourselves when we are ill, helpless, and in need of care from others.

The cross teaches us that we, like Jesus, give as much to others in our passivities as in our activities. When we are no longer in charge, beaten down by whatever, humiliated, suffering, and unable even to make ourselves understood by our loved ones, we are undergoing our passion and, like Jesus in his passion, have in that the opportunity to give our love and ourselves to others in a very deep way.

---

**1<sup>st</sup> Reader:            Thanksgiving**

---

For bearing the burden of our sins. **R/.**

**R/. We give you thanks, O Lord.**

For carrying the cross on our behalf. **R/.**

For raising the weight of our offences. **R/.**

---

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reader:            Let Us Pray**

---

Lord Jesus, may we be aware of the love you have for us;

so that in the difficult moments of our lives we may turn to you.

Lord, help us to be strong when we are persecuted unfairly. Amen.

## The Tenth Station – The Good Thief.

**L:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**P:** *Because, by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

---

### **1<sup>st</sup> Reader: Scripture Reading: (Luke 23:39-43)**

One of the criminals hanging there abused him. 'Are you not the Christ?' he said. 'Save yourself and us as well.' But the other spoke up and rebuked him. 'Have you no fear of God at all?' he said. 'You got the same sentence as he did, but in our case we deserved it: we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong. Jesus,' he said 'remember me when you come into your kingdom.' 'Indeed, I promise you,' he replied 'today you will be with me in paradise.'

---

### **Meditation: R Rolheiser OMI - The Communion of Saints (5-11-2006)**

Growing up, as part of our family prayer, we used to pray for a happy death. I pictured that this way: you died cradled in the loving arms of family, friends, and church, fully at peace with God and everyone around you.

That's a good picture, the ideal, but not everyone gets to die that way. Randomness, contingency, and accidents too often have us die in broken, compromised, and cold situations: bitter, unforgiving, unforgiven, not fully reconciled, alienated from someone, not going to church, angry, drunk, dead by drug overdose, a victim of suicide. Death, not infrequently, catches some of us before we've had time to say the things we should have said or do the things we should have done. Too often we die with unfinished business, too much of it. As the old confiteor says: we need forgiveness for what we've done and left undone.

To give a few examples: I was once counselling a man, a priest in his fifties, who was still unable to forgive himself because when he was a young, shy, and frightened boy of seven, and his mother lay dying, he was too afraid to give her a hug when she asked for it. More than forty years later, he still nursed guilt and a deep regret for this unfinished business with his long-dead mother.

In another case, I officiated at the funeral of a man who had been quite happily married for 35 years. One afternoon he had a bitter argument with his wife over some minor thing, rushed out of the house in anger, and was killed in an accident minutes later. What terrible timing for one's death!

Many of us can empathize with these examples. Who among us doesn't have unfinished business with someone whom death has taken away? Perhaps we had hurt that person, or he or she had hurt us, and it was never fully reconciled. Or we feel guilt because, while that person was alive, we should have given more of ourselves to him or her, but were too busy with our own lives to reach out. Worse still, perhaps someone has died for whom we had felt hatred and we should have made some gesture of reconciliation and we never did. Now it's too late! Death has separated us and some painful bitterness now lies irrevocably unresolved and we live with the guilt, wishing we had done something before it was too late.

But it's not too late. It's never too late if we take seriously the Christian doctrine of the communion of saints. This doctrine, so central and important that's enshrined in our creed, asks us

to believe that we are still in real community of life and communication with those who have died. To believe in the communion of saints is to believe that those who have died are still alive and are linked to us in such a way that we can continue to talk with them, that our relationship with them can continue to grow, and that the reconciliation that wasn't possible before their deaths can now occur.

Why can this happen now, when it seemed so impossible before? Because our communication with them is now privileged. Death washes some things clean. This is not the stuff of fantasy, but of solid dogma. We know its truth because we experience it.

How often in a family, a friendship, a community, or in any human network, do we experience a tension, a misunderstanding, an anger, a frustration, an irreconcilable difference, a selfishness, or a hurt that can't be undone, and then everything changes because someone dies? The death brings a peace, a clarity, and a charity, that were not possible before.

Why? It's not simply because the death changed the chemistry and took someone out of the family, the office, or the circle of friends, or even, as may sometimes seem the case, the source of the tension is the one who died. It happens because, as Luke's account of Jesus on the cross teaches, death washes things clean.

"Today you will be with me in paradise!" Jesus speaks those words to the good thief on the cross and they're meant for every one of us who dies without yet fully being a saint and without having had the time and opportunity to make all the amends and speak all the apologies that we owe to others. There is still time after death, on both sides, for reconciliation and healing to happen because inside the communion of saints we have privileged access to each other and there we can finally speak all of those words that we couldn't speak before. We can reach across death's divide.

It can be a great consolation to die a happy death, snug and reconciled in the arms of love, with no unfinished business. But, happily, there's time still after death for this to happen for those of us who aren't so lucky and who end up dying with some bitterness, anger, wound, and frustration still gnawing away.

---

**1<sup>st</sup> Reader:                    Thanksgiving**

---

For your forgiveness of the repentant sinner. **R/.**

**R/. We give you thanks, O Lord.**

For offering us pardon in our sinfulness. **R/.**

For calling us all to your eternal Kingdom. **R/.**

---

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reader:                    Let Us Pray**

---

Lord Jesus, expose us to the influence of your Spirit.

Teach us to be ourselves.

Take away the pretence that hides us from others and from you.

Give us openness of heart

and make us alert to your word:

ready for its transforming power. Amen