

**Good Friday, April 10, 2020**  
**Our Lord was given up**  
**(check our Facebook page for a video of this homily)**

We begin the Passion of our Lord in the darkness of night with Jesus and several of His apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane. He is praying, they were sleeping. Judas Iscariot arrives with a crowd that includes Temple guards, and betrays our Lord to them with a kiss.

Jesus is taken first to the house of Annas, the former High Priest, where He is interrogated. Then He is bound and sent to the house of the current High Priest, Caiaphas, where the Sanhedrin (a tribunal of elders) question Him. Jesus remains silent at first, but finally responds when asked if He is the Son of God? *"You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."*

Caiaphas tears his own clothes as he denounces Jesus for blasphemy. The Sanhedrin calls out for His death. Jesus is spat upon and struck. Meanwhile in the courtyard, Peter denies he knows our Lord to bystanders three times, just as predicted, and weeps bitterly.

Judas is seized with remorse, tries to return the 30 pieces of silver for which He has betrayed our Lord, but it is refused. He then goes off and kills himself.

On Friday morning Christ is brought before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. The religious leaders present three charges against Him:

*“Subverting our nation, forbidding us to pay the tribute tax to Caesar and claiming that He Himself is Christ, a king” (Lk 23:2).*

Pilate at first resists handling the case. He tells the elders to sentence Jesus according to their laws; then seeing He is a Galilean sends Him to King Herod of Galilee, who was in Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus remains silent before Herod whose soldiers then mock Him and take Him back to Pilate.

Pilate has Jesus whipped, then presents Him to the crowd along with a murderer named Barabbas, and asks which one they would like released for the Passover? The crowd cries for the release of Barabbas and for Jesus to be crucified.

Roman soldiers now take our Lord away. They strip Him, dress Him in a purple robe, crown Him with thorns, give Him a staff, and mock Him as king of the Jews. They spit on Him and beat Him about the face and head. Finally, putting His clothes back on Him, they led Jesus off to be crucified.

He is forced to carry His cross to a place called Golgotha, just outside the City walls, where – at about noon – He is stripped and crucified between two criminals. An inscription is placed over His head, *“The King of the Jews.”* The soldiers and other bystanders continue to mock Him.

Watching this take place are His mother, Mary, other women disciples, and the apostle John.

A darkness comes over the land. Then, at about 3 o'clock, our Lord breaths His last. The earth quakes and the veil of the Temple is torn in two, top to bottom.

Evening is approaching. A centurion thrusts a spear into the side of the body of Christ to make sure He is dead, and out flows water and blood. The body is then removed from the cross, wrapped in linen cloth, and buried in a new tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. A large stone is then rolled in front of the entrance. Guards will be posted in front of tomb.

What can one say about this terrible and glorious day? Silence and sorrow and gratitude are the most appropriate response.

But I will let the 4<sup>th</sup> century deacon, St Ephrem the Syrian, poet and writer of hymns, speak to us and for us:

Our Lord was given up today into the hands of sinners! For what reason was the Holy One, who is without sin, given up to death? For having done no sin – that is why He was given up.

For us, the ungodly, the Son of God was given up. Who would not marvel? Who would not give glory? When the slaves had sinned, it was the Master who suffered punishment for them.

[In the Garden of Gethsemane] the children of darkness went out into the darkness to arrest the Light of the World. But our Lord met their

effrontery and anger with gentleness; and by His own authority gave Himself into the hands of sinners.

And having bound Him in ropes they mocked Him. They laughed at His helplessness. Yet it was He who was that very day binding the “strong man” [the Devil] with unbreakable bonds, and setting us free from the bonds of our captivity.

In mockery they called Him “King” and spat in His face. Spat in the face of the Holy One, before whose countenance all the Powers of heaven and the ranks of Angels prostrate themselves in fear and adoration.

The Fashioner of all things, the Sinless One, was this day arraigned before Caiaphas, like a common criminal. And even lowly servants took it upon themselves to strike Him.

These mere mortals, seated while the Master stands, these men full of iniquities, passed judgment on the One who Judges the living and the dead.

The heavens trembled, earth’s foundations shuddered; Angels and Archangels all quailed with terror. Gabriel and Michael covered their faces with their wings at that moment, when a servant gave a blow to the Master.

Let us meditate, my brothers and sisters, and not simply listen. The Son of God endured all these things for me and you. Come, let us learn

what took place today in Zion, in David's city. On this day the longed-for Chosen One was rejected and given over to death.

What was creation's response to seeing its Creator nailed to a tree?  
The bright sun hid its face in shame; the earth quaked with sorrow.  
While men rejoiced, creation covered itself in grief and darkness.

[Yet while the earth mourned, the Temple Veil was torn asunder by the hand of God. For God and man were separated no more.]

For the Sinless One, the Son of God, had died for sinners. And through His death we are reborn to new life. By His captivity we are set free.

Let us offer up a Prayer of Spiritual Communion:

Our Lord Jesus Christ,  
We believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.  
We love You above all things,  
and we desire to receive You into our souls.

Since we cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,  
come at least spiritually into our hearts.

We embrace You as if You were already there  
and unite ourselves wholly to You.

Never permit us to be separated from You.

Amen.