

GOOD FRIDAY

(APRIL 2nd, 2021)

The Old Testament Reading is the Fourth Servant Song – Isaiah 52: 13 – 53: 12.

In this last of the Songs God promises that his Servant will be *lifted up, exalted, rise to great heights*. This is the outcome of his acceptance of suffering and death at the hands of sinners and on their behalf.

The New Testament Reading is the Letter to the Hebrews 4: 14 – 16 & 5: 7 – 9.

The writer teaches that Jesus is the Son who *learnt to obey through suffering and...became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation*.

The Passion Gospel is John 18: 1 – 19: 42.

The usual translation of the words describing the death of Jesus is *bowing his head he gave up the (or 'his') spirit*, but the word the evangelist uses means 'hand over'. At the moment of his death Jesus hands over the Holy Spirit to his people – the Church. And the implication of this gift is spelled out in what follows. *When the soldiers came to Jesus, they found that he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs one of them pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water.*

Among the interpretations of this stream of blood and water is the belief that they are signs of the two sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. One commentator (C. K. Barrett) writes: "It is of water and the Spirit that men are begotten from above, and water is the means by which men are cleansed. Again, the blood of Christ is the true drink of men. Through it alone, with the flesh of Christ, which equally is given for the life of the world, may men have life in themselves."

In this Holy Week, when most of us must fast from receiving Holy Communion, let us give thanks for our baptism and for the ease with which, in normal times, we may share in the eucharist.

In his poem *East Coker* T S Eliot wrote of the paradox of this day:

*The dripping blood our only drink,
The bloody flesh our only food:
In spite of which we like to think
That we are sound, substantial flesh and blood –
Again, in spite of that, we call this Friday good.*

GOOD FRIDAY

(APRIL 2nd, 2021)

We should weep, because our sins and the sins of the world have brought the Son of God to death on the cross, and yet we must rejoice, because, by that very same death, the love of God has overcome sin, evil and death – and given us a share in his victory.

In thy most bitter passion my heart to share doth cry,

With thee for my salvation upon the cross to die.

Ah, keep my heart thus movèd to stand thy cross beneath,

To mourn thee, well-belovèd, yet thank thee for thy death.

(From the hymn: *O sacred head, sore wounded.*)