

## HOLY SATURDAY

Scripture: John 19:25-42

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty." So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus though a secret one because of his fear of the Jewish leaders, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave his permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jewish people. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

## REFLECTION

After the solemn celebration of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday and the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, the altar remains completely bare, stripped of cloths, candles and cross. The churches remain completely empty, an emptiness to be sure, that we experienced in a profound and deathly way during the covid-19 pandemic. The Church does not celebrate the Eucharist on Holy Saturday but focuses our attention upon the tomb where Jesus lies, dead with all the dead. Holy Saturday gives us the opportunity to go deeper into the mystery of the divine love that gave itself so completely to us and for us. That entered so fully into the suffering, brokenness and death in our world – God's world! -- to bring healing and hope, mercy and new life.

This is where we are invited to stay today, at the tomb. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Saint Ignatius encourages us to ask for the grace to accompany Jesus, to feel sorrow with Jesus in sorrow and to let his anguish touch us. It is not an easy place to be, for if we open our eyes and hearts at the tomb, we will appreciate how the suffering and death of Jesus fills his family, friends, and disciples with grief and confusion. Most all the disciples have fled in fear. But we shall find Mary his mother and Mary Magdalene there, and also the disciple Jesus loved and entrusted his mother to -- and a few others who stayed close to him through it all. Joseph of Arimathea removed his body and provided a tomb. Nicodemus brought spices to dress the body. Then they wrapped it in linen clothes and laid it in the tomb as the Mary and the others looked on.

Perhaps you can stay a while in their company today. Trust that the Spirit can use your imagination to make the scene come alive! How do you picture the tomb? What do the mourners look like? Were there others there, too? Maybe Bartimaeus or a leper he healed? What are they saying to each other? Are they telling stories? Are they crying with each other? Comforting each other? Are you drawn to anyone in particular? Perhaps their love and their grief will touch your heart in a way that opens you up more deeply to Jesus' life and death.

Would you like to say something, ask anything of them? Of Jesus? I'm sure they were all pouring their hearts out to each other. And to Jesus, now dead in the

tomb. Probably talking to his Father-Abba, too, “How could you let this happen...” It’s amazing what people are moved to say to the dead when they visit graves.

Perhaps your own personal experience of deep loss, betrayal, or lost hope might come to the surface in a way you can bring to Jesus. Things that might make you feel like you’re in a grave, and you need new life and hope. Tell him! Many of us have feelings like this, not just about personal experiences, but because of how we experience our country right now, the violence in our world, the disregard of the environment or even the church. All of this is something that Jesus himself experienced. He is one in death with all the dead and all the death-dealing ways we find ourselves trapped in.

The good news is that in raising Jesus from the dead, God reveals the power and the ultimate, assured victory of divine love and mercy over all the powers of sin and death. This is what we shall celebrate tomorrow on Easter Sunday. “Therefore, let us with confidence draw close to the throne of grace where we shall receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb 4:16)

Fr Randy Sachs S.J.

(Images below)



