

PARISHES OF
ST PIUS X, ALDERLEY EDGE, ST BENEDICT'S, HANDFORTH
AND
SACRED HEART & ST TERESA'S WILMSLOW

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Sunday 29th March 2026 Palm Sunday

**The Way of the Cross
Jesus dies on the Cross**

“When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing near by, he said to his mother, “Dear woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.” John 19:26-27

“But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.” John 19: 33-34

“Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.” Luke 2: 34-35

Mary stands at the foot of the cross and ponders. She casts her mind back thirty-four years. An angel had been sent to her by God, the angel Gabriel. He told her not to be afraid. He told her the Holy Spirit would come upon her, that the power of the Most High would overshadow her and that she would give birth to the Son of God (Luke 1:26-35). When Mary conceives by the Holy Spirit, she bears in her womb the heart of God made man. She carries the heart of the Christ Child beneath her own heart. Both hearts beat within her.

The mystery of the cross begins to be more fully revealed to us when we contemplate it in the context of the Incarnation of Christ. The spirituality of Christianity is an Incarnational spirituality. God becomes man for us. He becomes a zygote. Fully human and fully divine. The union of heaven and earth.

It was common practice for the Roman soldiers to break the legs of their victims - crurifragium it was called - to hasten death. This was done for a number of reasons, one of which was to ensure compliance with the Jewish custom requiring that bodies were buried before nightfall. Psalm 34:20 tells us that the Lord “protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.” Not one of Jesus’ bones were broken - he was already dead when the soldiers came to him. Isaiah 53:5 tells us “he was pierced for our transgressions”. And so he was.

As Mary watches the soldiers pierce her son's heart with a spear - at that precise moment - Simeon's prophecy is fulfilled. Her soul is pierced with a sword. But it is a sword of love. She is pierced through with love for her son. In that moment, her heart is united with the heart of God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The church, which will be born on Pentecost, is conceived on the cross.

It is notable that the Gospel of John alone relates that, when the soldier's pierce Jesus' side with a spear, out flow blood and water. This detail is absent from the synoptic gospels but, in his high descending Christology, it is important to John to communicate that the blood of Christ is a sign of his redemptive sacrifice as the Lamb of God for us on the cross. It is also an important reminder of what Jesus said to his disciples (John 6:54-55) "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink."

Out of Christ's side also flows water, both the sign and symbol of new life with Christ in baptism and of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Christ becomes the fountain of water out of which flows the Holy Spirit. The exchange of love between the Father and the Son at the point of Christ's death bring forth in a unique way the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which reaches its visible fulfilment at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descends like tongues of fire upon the Apostles (Acts 2:3).

Before he died, Jesus gave his mother into the care and keeping of his beloved disciple. Jesus entrusted Mary to John, for him to be a son to her. To take on the role of caring for her as a son, as Christ himself had done. And the disciple who himself had rested his head upon Jesus' chest, close to His heart, at the Last Supper (John 13:23) is given Jesus' mother to console him. To be a mother to him.

And Mary is there in the upper room with the Apostles after the Ascension, joined with them in constant prayer (Acts 1: 14). Praying for the Holy Spirit to come upon the Apostles. As the Holy Spirit had come upon her, who is highly favoured (Luke 1:28), all those years ago. And as she prays, she ponders all these things in her heart... (Luke 2:19)

**Lord by your cross and resurrection
you have set us free.
You are the Saviour of the world**

Rachel Grayson