

A Reflection for Good Friday

The Rev. Carolyn Cranston '99, Director of Alumnae/i and Church Relations, PTS



Please read the story of the Crucifixion - Luke 23:26-47

Never before during my lifetime have we come to Good Friday with such a profound sense and understanding of suffering. Stepping out of the COVID-19 pandemic, we stepped into unprecedented natural disasters. To name just a few: tornados battered Southern and Midwestern states. Several hurricanes hit the mainland, including Helene, which unleashed unbelievable damage to Western North Carolina. As people in several states continue to struggle out of horrific conditions, wildfires left entire neighborhoods in Los Angeles, Calif., in ash and rubble. People in our neighborhoods, our country, and our world are suffering. When losing everything, how do we even begin to rebuild? We are suffering—if not for ourselves, for those around us.

Lent has not been about deciding what small token we can give up, or what spiritual discipline we can begin, or even where we can find the best fish fry. For many, it is: how do we survive such suffering?

God understands our suffering, for he sent his only begotten Son for our salvation. Jesus certainly understands suffering, for after being beaten and flogged, he obediently made the walk to Calvary and his death on the cross. This completely innocent man had his hands and feet nailed to a cross for crucifixion—the most disgraceful and grievous form of execution, reserved for the worst of all offenders. Hung between two thieves, mocked and taunted, Jesus said, “Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” In the midst of his pain, Jesus asked God to forgive us, the ones who deserved punishment. Eventually, his dying words were, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”

Jesus, the Holy One of God, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, voluntarily took upon himself the curse that should have been ours. The emblem of horror and shame became the symbol of new life and our salvation.

Today, I pray that you will stand a while at the foot of the cross, the place where, for us, new life began. Reflect on your own life. Are there sins that you can lay down at the foot of the cross? How can you live into a life of faith, a life that exemplifies Christ-like behavior? Easter is coming, but do not rush to get there too quickly. Thank Jesus for all that he has sacrificed so that we might have eternal life. Thanks be to God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.