

FRIDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD (GOOD FRIDAY)

LECTONARY #40

READING I Isaiah 52:13—53:12

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

See, my servant shall prosper,
 he shall be raised high and greatly exalted.
 Even as many were amazed at him—
 so marred was his look beyond human semblance
 and his appearance beyond that of the sons of man—
 so shall he startle many nations,
 because of him kings shall stand speechless,
 for those who have not been told shall see,
 and those who have not heard shall ponder it.

Who would believe what we have heard?

To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

He grew up like a sapling before him,
 like a shoot from the parched earth;

there was in him no stately bearing to make us look at him,
 nor appearance that would attract us to him.

He was spurned and avoided by people,
 a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity,

one of those from whom people hide their faces,
 spurned, and we held him in no esteem. »

Isaiah = 1-ZAY-uh

God is speaking through the prophet Isaiah, foretelling the messiah. The first section describes the disfiguring torture of a righteous man and his triumph to greatness. So unexpected, it renders one to speechlessness. Subdue the parenthetical.

Practice this question so that it can be delivered looking at the assembly. The "Who?" can be appropriated to us.

The servant is rejected by his own people, adding insult to injury.

READING I

Few (if any) Old Testament passages offer more apt imagery for understanding Christ's suffering than the portrayal of the suffering servant in Isaiah 52—53. This servant's exalted and elevated state, which is countered by his marred, other-than-human appearance, startles foreign observers, renders kings mute, and begets pondering or contemplation of those who see him. The mere sight of the servant seems to raise incredulity—"Who would believe what we have heard?" His appearance does not garner attention. It is not attrac-

tive. In fact, the servant seems detestable, someone from whom faces are hidden. Yet, his sufferings, his burdens, his God-given afflictions, and his quiet anguish result in appeal to today's first reading. Various New Testament authors quote or refer to portions of this passage from Isaiah. For example, commenting on Jesus' healing ministry, Matthew 8:17 highlights how "He took away our infirmities and bore our diseases." To explain why belief in Jesus after his many miracles (signs) continued to be difficult, John 12:38 refers to Isaiah 53:1, noting, "Lord, who has believed our preaching, to whom has the might of the Lord been

Yet it was **our infirmities** that he bore,
 our **sufferings** that he endured,
 while we thought of him as stricken,
 as one smitten by God and afflicted.
But he was pierced for **our offenses**,
 crushed for our sins,
 upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole,
 by his **stripes** we were **healed**.
 We had all **gone astray** like sheep,
 each following his own way,
 but the Lord laid upon him
 the **guilt** of us all.

Though he was **harshly treated**, he **submitted**
 and opened not his **mouth**,
 like a **lamb** led to the **slaughter**,
 or a sheep before the shearers,
 he was silent and opened not his mouth.
 Oppressed and condemned, he was taken **away**,
 and **who** would have thought any more of his **destiny**?
 When he was cut **off** from the land of the **living**,
 and **smitten** for the sin of his **people**,
 a **grave** was assigned him among the **wicked**
 and a burial place with evildoers,
 though he had done **no wrong**
 nor spoken any falsehood.

But the Lord was **pleased**
 to **crush** him in **infirmity**.

If he **gives his life** as an offering for **sin**,
 he shall see his **descendants** in a long life,
 and the **will** of the Lord shall be **accomplished**
 through him.
 Because of his affliction
 he shall see the **light** in fullness of days;

The narrator expresses the traditional way of understanding the servant's plight but quickly changes to acknowledge he had done no wrong. Emphasize "But" and "our" in the following sentence to make sure the assembly hears the correct interpretation.

Use a hushed, slow voice to describe his complete submission—a shocking reaction of one in torture.

This is another opportunity to look directly at the assembly and deliver the question.

Even in death, the servant was humiliated.

"Pleased" because God knows the ultimate outcome of the servant.

revealed?" Belief in Jesus, according to John's interpretation of the Suffering Servant, was difficult and required divine revelation. By appealing to the same passage in Isaiah, Paul makes a similar argument in Romans 10:16–17. Jesus quotes part of the Suffering Servant passage before departing from the Last Supper and heading for Getsemane in the Gospel of Luke. In doing so, Jesus shows that he will fulfill Isaiah's prophecy when he is "counted among the wicked" that is, arrested, put on trial, condemned, and executed as a criminal. When 1 Peter 2:19–25 appeals to vari-

ous verses in Isaiah 53, the purpose is to show how, in Jesus, we can understand innocent suffering as commendable. And in Acts 8:32–35, the Ethiopian eunuch is reading the Suffering Servant passage of Isaiah when Philip overhears and begins, from that passage, to share the Good News of Jesus.

As we keep the memorial of the Lord's passion today, we once more turn to the words of the prophet Isaiah and hear them proclaimed in our midst. As they resound amid the community gathered on this Good Friday, they prepare us to hear once more the account of the Lord's suffering, passion, and death. And so prepared, we are able to enter more deeply into that mystery of Jesus' death, by which we know salvation.

While Hebrews continues to focus on sacrificial, vicarious offerings made for others, as in the first reading, the focus here broadens. Christ's high priestly status garners initial attention in this reading. Subsequently, Jesus' efficacious self-sacrifice is discussed. Building on an analogy with the priesthood of Aaron, Hebrews presents Jesus as the "great high priest who has passed

READING II

through his suffering, my servant shall justify many,
and their guilt he shall bear.
Therefore I will give him his portion among the great,
and he shall divide the spoils with the mighty,
because he surrendered himself to death
and was counted among the wicked,
and he shall take away the sins of many,
and win pardon for their offenses.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25 (Luke 23:46)

R. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

In you, O LORD, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
In your justice rescue me.
Into your hands I commend my spirit;
you will redeem me, O LORD,
O faithful God.
For all my foes I am an object of reproach,
a laughingstock to my neighbors, and a
dread to my friends;
they who see me abroad flee from me;
I am forgotten like the unremembered dead;
I am like a dish that is broken.

Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your kindness.
Take courage and be stouthearted,
all you who hope in the LORD.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

READING II Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

Brothers and sisters:
Since we have a great high priest who has passed through
the heavens,
Jesus, the Son of God,
let us hold fast to our confession.
For we do not have a high priest
who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,
but one who has similarly been tested in every way,
yet without sin. »

we can also be confident that we are
prayers, loud cries, and tears. The reaction
is entirely, fully human. Death is scary. The
fully and perfectly human Jesus passion-
ately appeals to God for deliverance from
death. Yet, he also remains faithful to his
identity as the Son of God. For this he suf-
fered (*pascho* in Greek). And through the
mystery of suffering, he learned (*mathano*
in Greek) obedience (*hupakoē* in Greek).
After Hebrews unpacks Jesus' unprec-
edented yet accessible high priesthood and
establishes the confidence we can have
in him, it turns our focus back to Jesus' suf-
fering. He faces death in the flesh with
God and thereby reveals his perfection,

The high priest is Jesus, the one who
mediates for us.
The double negatives might make it difficult
to hear the positive meaning. Paul is saying
that we do have a high priest who is able
to sympathize with us: Jesus. As you
proclaim the double negatives, ensure that
the positive meaning of them can be heard.

This is good news. We are part of the "many"
made righteous.

For meditation and context:

“Confidentially” tells you how to read this.

So let us **confidently approach** the throne of **grace** to **receive mercy** and to find **grace** for **timely help**. In the days when **Christ** was in the **flesh**, he offered **prayers** and **supplications** with **loud cries** and **tears** to the one who was able to **save him from death**, and he was **heard** because of his **reverence**. **Son** though he was, he learned **obedience** from what he suffered, and when he was made **perfect**, he became the **source** of **eternal salvation** for all who **obey him**.

GOSPEL John 18:1—19:42

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

Jesus went out with his **disciples** across the Kidron valley to where there was a **garden**, into which he and his disciples entered. **Judas** his **betray**er also **knew** the place, because Jesus had **often** met there with his disciples. So **Judas** got a band of **soldiers** and **guards** from the **chief priests** and the **Pharisees** and went there with **lanterns**, **torches**, and **weapons**. Jesus, **knowing everything** that was going to happen to him, went out and said to them, “**Whom** are you looking for?” They answered him, “**Jesus** the **Nazorean**.” He said to them, “**I AM**.” **Judas** his **betray**er was also with them. When he said to them, “**I AM**,” they turned away and **fell** to the ground. So he again asked them, “**Whom** are you looking for?” They said, “**Jesus** the **Nazorean**.”

what God accomplished for us in Jesus' suffering and death. To commemorate God's deeper faith and greater hope, to God's loving care. John begins his passion account with Jesus and his disciples crossing the Kidron valley to an unnamed garden, which he had previously frequented with them. The short journey results in an almost immediate encounter with Judas and a band of soldiers and guards. John alone provides the name of the valley, which may subtly refer to David's flight from his son, Absalom, who already heard this week and invites us to enter the mystery of Christ's passion more deeply. We entrust ourselves, with the Church commemorates

The energy of the narrative quickens with the mention of soldiers, weapons, and Jewish authorities. Jesus is in control: he goes out to meet them and initiates the dialogue. Use an upward inflection for his question. Here, "I AM" is more than a simple statement of identification: it recalls for us one of the divine names of God in the Old Testament and illustrates Jesus' divinity. The name, so strong on Jesus' lips, causes the people arresting him to fall to the ground. The name is repeated three times, an intentional use by the evangelist. Proclaim it clearly. Jesus repeats his question. He remains calm.

Kidron = KID-ruhn

PASSION

Each year on Good Friday, which is also our way to salvation. Thus, Hebrews argues that the meaning of suffering is revealed in Christ. For our part, as we follow Christ and undergo suffering, we too learn obedience, which is to say, we seek to submit our wills and intellects to God's will and plan for us. It is this dynamic transformation through suffering that we are invited to contemplate as we open ourselves to the passion account proclaimed in the Gospel.

Jesus answered, "I told you that I AM. So if you are looking for me, let these men go." "I have not lost any of those you gave me." Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its scabbard. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father gave me?" So the band of soldiers, the tribune, and the Jewish guards seized Jesus, bound him, and brought him to Annas first. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had counseled the Jews that it was better that one man should die rather than the people. Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Now the other disciple was known to the high priest, and he entered the courtyard of the high priest with Jesus. But Peter stood at the gate outside. So the other disciple, the acquaintance of the high priest, went out and spoke to the gatekeeper and brought Peter in. Then the maid who was the gatekeeper said to Peter, "You are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." Now the slaves and the guards were standing around a charcoal fire that they had made, because it was cold, and were warming themselves. Peter was also standing there keeping warm. »

call the place "Gethsemane," nor does he refer to the "Mount of Olives." Yet he alone identifies the location as a garden. Some interpreters associate his reference to a garden with the opening chapters of Genesis and thus consider it a new Eden—a place in which God initiates a renewed relationship with humanity. Those with Judas are evidently numerous. The "band of soldiers" (*speira* in Greek) refers to a collection of Roman military figures that typically number in the hundreds. Such a contingent is evidently sent from Pilate. The armed guards or police (*nupheretes* only is Jesus aware of what will happen to plainly, "Whom are you looking for?" Not *Jesus* approaches the crowd and asks them to betray him with a kiss. Instead, Jesus to betray Judas brazenly approach Neither does Judas brazenly approach enduring anguished prayer at this time. Gospels, John does not present Jesus as Hebrews or the witness of the other and unconcerned. Unlike the account in Greek). This phrase identifies Jesus not simply as the human being sought by the crowd, but as the God of Israel who, revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush, Exodus 3:14). This is God's name revealed to the chosen people. It is the name that is sacred and powerful. The crowd's response—turning away and falling to the

Peter responds casually; leave room for his details to escalate in the coming verses.

Use a hushed tone. They do not want to attract attention.

Annas = AN-uhs
Caiaphas = KAY-uh-fuh-s or KI-uh-fuh-s

scabbard = SCA-b'rd
Malchus = MAL-kuhs
voice.
with energy and then return to the narrator
impetuous Peter! Read this burst of violence these details.
fulfilled. Use a steady, even tone to provide will explain how the Scriptures are being Multiple times in this reading, the narrator

Jesus answered,
"I told you that I AM.
So if you are looking for me, let these men go."
"I have not lost any of those you gave me."
Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it,
struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear.
The slave's name was Malchus.
Jesus said to Peter,
"Put your sword into its scabbard.
Shall I not drink the cup that the Father gave me?"
So the band of soldiers, the tribune, and the Jewish guards
seized Jesus,
bound him, and brought him to Annas first.
He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas,
who was high priest that year.
It was Caiaphas who had counseled the Jews
that it was better that one man should die rather than
the people.
Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus.
Now the other disciple was known to the high priest,
and he entered the courtyard of the high priest with Jesus.
But Peter stood at the gate outside.
So the other disciple, the acquaintance of the high priest,
went out and spoke to the gatekeeper and brought Peter in.
Then the maid who was the gatekeeper said to Peter,
"You are not one of this man's disciples, are you?"
He said, "I am not."
Now the slaves and the guards were standing around
a charcoal fire
that they had made, because it was cold,
and were warming themselves.
Peter was also standing there keeping warm. »

The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his doctrine.

Jesus answered him,

"I have spoken publicly to the world.

I have always taught in a synagogue

or in the temple area where all the Jews gather,

and in secret I have said nothing. Why ask me?

Ask those who heard me what I said to them.

They know what I said."

When he had said this,

one of the temple guards standing there struck Jesus and said,

"Is this the way you answer the high priest?"

Jesus answered him,

"If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong;

but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?"

Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Now Simon Peter was standing there keeping warm.

And they said to him,

"You are not one of his disciples, are you?"

He denied it and said,

"I am not."

One of the slaves of the high priest,

a relative of the one whose ear Peter had cut off, said,

"Didn't I see you in the garden with him?"

Again Peter denied it.

And immediately the cock crowed.

Then they brought Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium.

It was morning.

And they themselves did not enter the praetorium,

in order not to be defiled so that they could eat the Passover.

So Pilate came out to them and said,

"What charge do you bring against this man?"

Jesus speaks calmly; he has no secrets.

Emphasize "struck" and use a tone of false bravado for the guard's question.

This is Peter's second denial. Use a little more energy but save the strongest, most defiant tone for the third denial.

Pause after "crowed." Give the well-known prediction of betrayal time to settle in. It is not just Peter's denial we reflect on, but also on our own denial of Jesus when we fall short in our daily lives.

praetorium = prīh-TOHR-ee-uhm

The narrative will alternate the dialogue between Pilate and Jesus, inside, with the crowd, outside. Practice so that the assembly can follow the back-and-forth exchanges and the movement of the characters.

ground—shows the power of the divine name, even if the crowd does not acknowledge Jesus as the incarnate Lord. A second time Jesus initiates an exchange with a question, and the crowd's verbal response is identical. This time, Jesus expands his answer with words that further echo the Lord's mandates in the Exodus. As when Moses, following the Lord's command, tells Pharaoh to let God's people go (see Exodus 5:1), so Jesus commands the crowd to "let these men go." The results of both man-dates match. In the garden, as in Egypt, the Lord's company is spared. Strikingly, John

explicitly indicates earlier that Judas is a member of the company that rivals the Lord. The garden scene closes with the familiar skirmish in which a member of the crowd has his ear cut off. John, unique among the Gospel writers, names all parties involved and Jesus, still governing the whole scene, has the final word. He calls for an end to the skirmish and, with a rhetorical question, invites Peter, the perpetrator, to accept Jesus' plight: "Shall I not drink the cup that the Father gave me?" Seized and bound, Jesus is led by the crowd to Jewish leaders, the high priests

denies that he is Jesus' disciple. His language

Annas and Caiaphas, in Jerusalem. They will oversee his official interrogation. As with Mark's passion account, a parallel scene unfolds in which Peter, in this case aided by a disciple known to the high priest, makes his way into the high priest's courtyard. Peter seeks to stay close to Jesus, yet at various points during Jesus' official questioning he is recognized as a disciple of Jesus. At the gate, when entering the courtyard, a maid questions him. Twice while warming himself by a fire in the courtyard, slaves grill him. Each time, Peter

They answered and said to him,
 "If he were not a criminal,
 we would not have handed him over to you."
 At this, Pilate said to them,
 "Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law."
 The Jews answered him,
 "We do not have the right to execute anyone,"
 in order that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled
 that he said indicating the kind of death he would die.
 So Pilate went back into the praetorium
 and summoned Jesus and said to him,
 "Are you the King of the Jews?"
 Jesus answered,
 "Do you say this on your own
 or have others told you about me?"
 Pilate answered,
 "I am not a Jew, am I?
 Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me.
 What have you done?"
 Jesus answered,
 "My kingdom does not belong to this world.
 If my kingdom did belong to this world,
 my attendants would be fighting
 to keep me from being handed over to the Jews.
 But as it is, my kingdom is not here."
 So Pilate said to him,
 "Then you are a king?"
 Jesus answered,
 "You say I am a king.
 For this I was born and for this I came into the world,
 to testify to the truth.
 Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."
 Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" >>

Pilate distances himself from the Jewish people and their affairs.

A famous line in Scripture: don't rush it.

precisely contrasts with Jesus' testimony in the garden—"I am not" (*ouk eimi* in Greek), says Peter. His false testimony simultane-ously reveals his weakness and the impor- tant theological reality that is true for all Jesus' disciples: Peter (or any other person then or now) is not Israel's incarnate Lord; that remains true of Jesus alone. Peter's third and last denial of Jesus is punctuated with a cock's crow. While John has long since reported Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial (John 13:38), John seems to associ- ate this cockcrow with a more significant matter—the change of time. It is now the

earliest hour of the morning (just after 3 AM). The day is dawning. Passover begins at sundown.
 Jesus, for his part, undergoes a formal inquisition simultaneous with Peter's infor- mal questioning. Annas questions him about his students (disciples) and his teach- ings. Jesus claims to have taught openly in public places where many heard him teach. He encourages inquiry of those who heard him teach. He calls for witnesses. The pro- posal earns him a blow from a guard and a rhetorical reprimand. Jesus responds by doubling down on his request for due pro- cess. He asks for testimony explaining his mistreatment: "if I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" For John, as opposed to the synoptic accounts, Jesus experienced a miscarriage of justice on the level of procedure. He underwent a hearing without any indication that witnesses were presented for his case or that due process of any kind was followed. Jesus' formal inquisition before Annas is simply and sud- denly shifted to the domain of Caiaphas, Annas' relative and probable cronny. John reports nothing of what happens in Jesus'

When he had said this,
 he **again** went **out** to the Jews and said to them,
 "I find no **guilt** in him.
 But you have a custom that I **release** one **prisoner** to you
 at Passover.
 Do you want me to release to you the **King** of the Jews?"
 They **cried** out again,
 "Not this one but **Barabbas**!"
 Now Barabbas was a **revolutionary**.

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him **scourged**.
 And the soldiers wove a **crown** out of thorns and placed it
 on his head,
 and **clothed** him in a **purple** cloak,
 and they came to him and said,
 "Hail, **King** of the Jews!"
 And they **struck** him repeatedly.
 Once more Pilate went out and said to them,
 "Look, I am bringing him out to you,
 so that you may know that I find no **guilt** in him."
 So Jesus came out,
 wearing the crown of **thorns** and the purple **cloak**.
 And he said to them, "Behold, the man!"
 When the chief priests and the guards saw him they **cried** out,
 "Crucify him, **crucify** him!"
 Pilate said to them,
 "Take him **yourselves** and crucify him.
 I find no **guilt** in him."
 The Jews answered,
 "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die,
 because he **made himself** the Son of God."
 Now when Pilate **heard** this statement,
 he became even **more** afraid,
 and went back into the praetorium and said to Jesus,
 "Where are you **from**?"

The torturing of Jesus is hard to hear.
 The intensity of the reading is felt by
 the mob's repeated response.

Barabbas = buh-RAB-uhs

hearing with Caiaphas. He only signals, at the outset of Jesus' "trial," that Caiaphas had been counseling fellow Jews "that it was better that one man should die rather than the people." Thus, when Jesus appears before Caiaphas, we are to understand that his fate is sealed. Death awaits. When Jesus is taken to Pilate, the process changes and the nature of his case comes under scrutiny. The procedural problems in Jesus' hearings before Jewish officials give way to concerns about ritual procedure in interactions with Pilate. Pilate must come out to meet Jesus' accusers, since they want to avoid becoming defiled before Passover by being in Pilate's headquarters. Such defilement would render them unable to partake in the Passover meal later that day. Pilate obliges, upholding procedures of Jewish ritual law. As for the nature of Jesus' case, it becomes a dispute between Jewish and Roman authorities over legal jurisdiction in cases of capital crimes. Which authority in first-century Roman Palestine has the right to handle Jesus' capital case? The matter is subtle, complex, and fraught with challenges and inconsistencies. Roman authorities clearly have the legal prerogative to try and implement capital cases for both Roman citizens and non-citizen residents of provincial regions like Palestine. Still, Jewish authorities in Palestine also have some prerogative to handle capital cases and execute justice accordingly. Thus, Stephen is stoned in Acts 7:58-60 and Paul, seemingly fearing the same fate, avoids a trial in Jerusalem by appeal to the Roman judicial system as a citizen (Acts 25:9-11). So, when John reports that Jewish authorities did not consider themselves able to execute Jesus, their claim seems to signal

Jesus did not answer him.
So Pilate said to him,
"Do you not speak to me?"

Do you not know that I have power to release you
and I have power to crucify you?"
Jesus answered him,
"You would have no power over me
if it had not been given to you from above.

For this reason the one who handed me over to you
has the greater sin."
Consequently, Pilate tried to release him,
but the Jews cried out,

"If you release him, you are not a friend of Caesar."
Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."
When Pilate heard these words he brought Jesus out
and seated him on the judge's bench

in the place called Stone Pavement, in Hebrew, Gabbatha.
It was preparation day for Passover, and it was about noon.
And he said to the Jews,
"Behold, your king!"
They cried out,

"Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!"
Pilate said to them,
"Shall I crucify your king?"
The chief priests answered,
"We have no king but Caesar."

Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.
So they took Jesus, and, carrying the cross himself,
he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull,
in Hebrew, Golgotha.

There they crucified him, and with him two others,
one on either side, with Jesus in the middle. »

Pilate is flaunting his authority. Use an indignant tone.

The crowd, unwilling to accept Pilate's decision, increase the stakes. They use fear to control him.

Gabbatha = GAB-uh-thuh

Accent "himself" He alone takes the sins of the world.

Golgotha = GAWL-guh-thuh

the nature of Jesus' case. They do not want him tried for blasphemy, at least not initially, but for an infraction of imperial law. Based on Pilate's first inquiry, the accusation against Jesus seems to be insurrection—specifically, that he claims to be the "king of the Jews."
The initial exchange between Pilate and Jesus results in discourses running at cross purposes. Although both men talk of Jesus' kingdom and kingship, their interests differ. Pilate wants juridical clarity and certitude. Jesus wants truth. Pilate cannot grasp Jesus' meaning or find him guilty.

Nonetheless, recognizing the discord it has wrought, he appeals to the custom of releasing a prisoner at Passover. The release of Barabbas, a revolutionary, is requested in place of Jesus' release. Pilate has Jesus punished. Soldiers scourge, beat, and mock him by crowning him with thorns, clothing him in royal purple, and hailing him as "king of the Jews." Then, demonstrating the lack of threat authorities. The legal justification for Jesus' death, in human terms, would shift from being an imperial infraction to a religious one. Yet, hearing this accusation, Pilate flaunted before the chief priests and guards interrogates Jesus with renewed fervor

Pilate also had an **inscription** written and put on the cross.

It read, "Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews."

Now many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.

So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that he said, 'I am the King of the Jews;'"

Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four shares, a share for each soldier.

They also took his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top down.

So they said to one another, "Let's not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it will be," in order that the passage of Scripture might be fulfilled that says:

They divided my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots.

This is what the soldiers did. Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved

he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son."

Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother."

And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

Read the inscription slowly. Reflect on Pilate's choice of words in the context of the back and forth he and the religious authorities and crowds had, as well as his question of "What is truth?"

The scene changes to those who support Jesus. Use a tone of compassion and admiration. These women are brave. They stand in solidarity and witness Jesus' final moments. Clopas = KLOH-puhs

Despite his agony, Jesus demonstrates his love for his mother and provides for her.

rather than handing him over to Jewish authorities. Jesus remains silent. Only when Pilate threatens Jesus with his "power to crucify" him does Jesus speak up, reminding Pilate that his power does not come from his own authority but is given to him "from above." Jesus refers to God. Pilate, however, likely understands Jesus to refer to the Roman authority over Pilate. Wishing to release Jesus, Pilate again presents the case before the locals, who now threaten to charge Pilate with insurrection. Releasing Jesus would mean

opposing Caesar. Recognizing the direction that the whole affair is taking, Pilate subjects Jesus to a mock public trial. Placing him on the judge's bench, twice Pilate refers sarcastically to Jesus as "your king." In a choreographed response to Pilate's mocking of Jesus' authority, the locals profess their allegiance to Caesar, not their humiliated countryman. Jesus is swiftly condemned to death by crucifixion and promptly led out to the designated place for such executions (Golgotha, the "Place of the Skull").

When he is crucified between two criminals, the legal charge leveled against Jesus is hung over his head. It is an imperial infraction—when he is crucified "the king of the Jews." Local authorities ask to include a religious infraction as well—"I am the king of the Jews." Pilate keeps the charge as written. The show of power is complete. The deed is done.

While he is hanging on the cross, Jesus' seamless tunic is gambled away among soldiers. His mother, some of the women from his cohort, and the disciple whom he

Read slowly and with sadness.

After this, aware that everything was now **finished**,
 in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled,
 Jesus said, "I **thirst**."
 There was a vessel filled with common **wine**.
 So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop
 and put it up to his **mouth**.
 When Jesus had **taken** the wine, he said,
 "It is **finished**."
 And **bowing** his head, he **handed** over the spirit.
 [Here all kneel and pause for a short time.]

Now since it was **preparation** day,
 in order that the bodies might not **remain**
 on the cross on the **sabbath**,
 for the sabbath day of that week was a **solemn** one,
 the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be **broken**
 and that they be taken **down**.
 So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the **first**
 and then of the **other** one who was crucified with Jesus.
 But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was **already** dead,
 they did not break **his** legs,
 but one soldier thrust his lance into his **side**,
 and immediately **blood** and **water** flowed out.
 An eyewitness has **testified**, and his testimony is **true**;
 he knows that he is speaking the truth,
 so that you **also** may come to believe.
 For this happened so that the Scripture passage might
 be fulfilled:

Not a bone of it will be broken.

And again another passage says:

They will look upon him whom they have pierced. »

loved gather by the cross. In simple phrases
 reminiscent of an exchange of vows, Jesus
 entrusts his beloved disciple to his mother
 and her to the beloved disciple. He
 acknowledges his thirst, which he shares
 with wine provided, symbolically, on hyssop.
 No longer thirsty, with all things fulfilled,
 and in full control, Jesus declares: "It is fin-
 ished." And he dies.
 The soldiers, having not noticed Jesus'
 death, set out to expedite the executions
 by breaking the legs of those crucified.
 Jesus, already dead, is pierced through, the
 blood and water that flow from his side
 symbolize the Holy Spirit. They also serve
 as types of baptism and the Eucharist.
 Our mother's womb but entering into
 Christ's death, which is made present to us
 in the baptismal waters.
 Finally, the garden of the crucifixion
 and burial is a direct symbol—in it we have
 a new Eden, from which new life will
 emerge. E.W.

John 3), has learned that being born from
 above has nothing to do with re-entering
 our mother's womb but entering into
 Christ's death, which is made present to us
 in the baptismal waters.
 Finally, the garden of the crucifixion
 and burial is a direct symbol—in it we have
 a new Eden, from which new life will
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blood and water that flow from his side
 symbolize the Holy Spirit. They also serve
 as types of baptism and the Eucharist.
 Accordingly, this piercing inaugurates a
 new era in the human community's rela-
 tionship with God. Christ's death, into
 which we are baptized, comes with a prom-
 ise of eternal life. Thus, it is fitting that,
 when Joseph of Arimathea obtains Jesus'
 body by Pilate's permission, Nicodemus
 also helps bury him. Nicodemus, who went
 to speak with Jesus at night to inquire
 about Jesus' teaching on eternal life (see

Arimatea = ayr-ih-muh-THEE-uh
 The conclusion describes many details about
 the burial process. The inclusion of it here
 and the way John describes the actions give
 witness to the fact that Jesus is once again
 in the company of those who love him: the
 compassionate handling of the body, the
 large amounts of oils and spices, and the
 fresh tomb.
 Nicodemus = nihk-uh-DEE-muhs
 myrrh = mer
 aloes = Al-ohz
 We return to a garden at the close of the
 reading.

After this, Joseph of Arimatea,
 secretly a disciple of Jesus for fear of the Jews,
 asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus.
 And Pilate permitted it.
 So he came and took his body.
Nicodemus, the one who had first come to him at night,
 also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes
 weighing about one hundred pounds.
 They took the body of Jesus
 and bound it with burial cloths along with the spices,
 according to the Jewish burial custom.
 Now in the place where he had been crucified there was
 a garden,
 and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet
 been buried.
 So they laid Jesus there because of the Jewish preparation day,
 for the tomb was close by.