

Community of the Cross of Nails
Friday Prayers for Peace and Reconciliation
Friday 3rd April 2026, Good Friday

Bible Reading: John 19.16-36

Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified. So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am 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 parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfil what the scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots." And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, 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 fulfil the scripture), "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was standing there. 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 Jews 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."

Reflection

In many ways it may seem strange to call this day *Good Friday*. What happened to Jesus that day is by all human measures the exact opposite of good. His trial and sentence to death go against all that we would consider just and legal in our modern world. Though in many parts of the world the law is used in a very unjust way. People are tried not just for genuine criminal acts but for their beliefs and for protecting human rights. Such injustices lead not only to imprisonment but also to death.

The form of death to which our Lord was subjected was particularly brutal, cruel and painful, not to mention humiliating. Torture is sadly still common in our world today, with the aim of breaking not only the body but the spirit, in the hope of stifling any dissent.

Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion certainly had a devastating effect on his followers. We are told that only the women and the beloved disciple remained with Jesus at the cross. The rest fled, from fear or perhaps disillusionment. That must have been particularly painful for Jesus, in addition to the very real physical pain he suffered.

Those who stand up for justice may often feel deserted, alone. That may even lead to moments of self-doubt if not despair. How human beings can treat others so cruelly and cause not only physical suffering but also psychological pain is so difficult to understand. What drives them to this can perhaps justifiably be called demonic.

How anything of what Jesus suffered could by any stretch of the imagination be called good seems quite senseless. Yet herein lies the paradox that St Paul expressed so clearly: "we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength." (1 Corinthians 1.23-25).

For we know what happened next and that sheds a completely new light on the events of Good Friday, enabling us to see that what Jesus did that day was indeed good. As St Paul reminds us it was the means by which God reconciled us to himself (2 Corinthians 5.18-19). That was truly good – good news: the Good News of redemption, salvation, liberation, the Good News of God's love for us all. As our liturgy states: "The tree of shame was made the tree of glory; and where life was lost, there life has been restored".

The various problems in our world today may seem hopeless, without a satisfactory solution in sight. Yet the message of Good Friday is that all is not lost, far from it. There is hope for peace and for justice. For such we believe is God's will for the whole of humanity, and indeed for the natural world.

(Kingsley Boulton)

Prayers

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.
O Saviour of the world, who by your cross and precious blood have redeemed
us, save us and help us, we humbly pray.

Collect for Good Friday:

Eternal God, in the cross of Jesus we see the cost of our sin and the depth of
your love: in humble hope and fear may we place at his feet all that we have
and all that we are, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Common Worship*)

A prayer for Iran

Ever-loving God, who hears us in our anguish and distress, and longs for us to
be free. We pray for the people of Iran and the wider Middle East, at this time
of fear and uncertainty. Be near to those who are anxious; bring comfort to all
who are suffering. Guide those with the power to make decisions, and lead
them in the ways of wisdom, compassion and moderation: that people of
goodwill would seek harmony and reconciliation. Join us with our Christian
brothers and sisters in all places, in praying for peace with justice, through him
who is the prince of peace, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(*The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford*)

A prayer for the Holy Land

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to
be the true bread which gives life to the world: In your mercy, provide for all
those in Gaza and beyond who suffer from hunger and starvation, that they
may be given both physical bread to nourish their bodies and heavenly bread
to sustain their souls. By the power of your Spirit, bring a speedy end to this
cruel war, the release of all captives, care for the sick and wounded, comfort
for those who have lost loved-ones, and the opening of a pathway for a just
and lasting peace here in the very homeland where your Son, our Lord Jesus
Christ, ministered during his earthly life; who lives and reigns with you and the
Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (*The Most Revd Dr Hosam E.
Naoum Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem – August 2025*)

A prayer for Ukraine

Holy God, we hold before you all who live close to war and conflict; and all
who live close to the threat of war and violence. We remember especially at
this time, people in Ukraine and Russia. We pray for nonviolence and peaceful
resolutions of conflict. Give us hearts of hospitality and sanctuary, forgive us
all our hostility and hatred. Bring all people to the humanity you give us, and to
the reconciliation and healing for which you gave your life. Strengthen us all to
work with you to build justice and peace, reconciliation and healing, in our
hearts and homes, in our streets, in all communities, neighbourhoods and
nations. Bless all who live lives for the peace and wellbeing of others, and
make their service fruitful. In the name of Christ. Amen. (*The Revd Inderjit
Bhogal, Honorary President, The Fellowship of Reconciliation*)

A prayer for peace throughout the world

Lord, you have taught us that the world is yours and those who dwell on it. Hear us therefore as we pray for the life of the world; that every nation may seek the way that leads to peace; that human rights and freedom may everywhere be respected; and that the earth's resources may be ungrudgingly shared among all people. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(*A Christian's Prayer Book*)

A prayer for refugees

Almighty and merciful God, whose Son became a refugee and had no place to call his own; look with mercy on those who today are fleeing from danger, homeless and hungry. Bless those who work to bring them relief; inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts; and guide the nations of the world towards that day when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and of peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Church of England prayers*)

A prayer for the Community of the Cross of Nails

Almighty God, you have committed to us the ministry of reconciliation of your Son, Jesus Christ; give us the confidence in your power to forgive, as your Son forgave us from the Cross. Enable us to be witnesses of your forgiveness at work and where we live. Unite us in a sacred fellowship to heal the hostilities we see, and give us the grace to love one another, rejoicing in this life together. Amen.

A prayer for all those affected by all forms of illness:

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy. Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

World Council of Churches Ecumenical Prayer Cycle:

We pray this week for the peoples of the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia.

Community of the Cross of Nails Prayer Cycle:

We pray today for partners in **Israel/Palestine:**

in Ramallah: Arab Evangelical Episcopal School;

in Shefar' Am: International Peace Centre (House of Hope); and
St Paul's Episcopal Church.

We pray too for the other partners in **Israel/Palestine:**

in Bethehem: Mar Ephrem School;

in Jerusalem: Musalaha;

St George the Martyr Cathedral;

St Mark's Church and Monastery; and

Tantur Ecumenical Institute.

We pray too for the partners in **Ukraine:**

in Odessa: St Paul's Congregation;

in **Russia**:

in Kaliningrad: the Evangelical Resurrection Church;

in Moscow: St Andrew's Anglican Church;

in St Petersburg: St Catherine's Lutheran Church;

and in **Belarus**:

in Minsk: the International Conference Centre IBB.

And we ask God's blessing on our own ministry of peace and reconciliation at St Martin.

Coventry Litany of Reconciliation

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class,
Father Forgive.

The covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own,
Father Forgive.

The greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the earth,
Father Forgive.

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others,
Father Forgive.

Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee,
Father Forgive.

The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children,
Father Forgive.

The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God,
Father Forgive.

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;**

thy kingdom come;

thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

**And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Concluding Prayer

Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.