**Reflections for Good Friday 2020**

My friends, I would invite you, on your own, with your spouse and with your family, to read the Passion according to St. John. Afterwards, I would like you to spend time reflecting on some of the scenes. Close your eyes and imagine what it would have been like to have been at the Passion, the sights, the smells, the sounds, the emotions of that terrible day. Once you have finished this time of private prayer, I invite you to ponder these following reflections:

**The Kiss of Judas.** Imagine looking at someone you called a friend, someone who walked with you for 3 years, who you gave a share in your mission to bring people out of darkness into light, who you feed with your Body and Blood, someone that you knew was a traitor, who doubted you, who was consumed by greed and willing to allow Satan into his life, yet still you hoped against hope he may turn from his evil ways. To kiss someone in Jesus’ day was a sign of affection, of saying you are my brother, that the peace of God be upon you forever. And in that act of betrayal the Lord does not condemn, He would have forgiven Judas had he but asked. My friends, have we been like Judas to Jesus or to someone we love?

**Peter Denies Jesus Three Times.** Jesus is the great I AM, He is the Word made Flesh, the Way, the Truth and the Life. But to Peter before all others, He gives the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, to be the chief shepherd of His flock, His Pontiff, that is, His bridge builder to draw all peoples to Christ. And when it matters most, when Peter is called to testify that he is a disciple of Jesus, the leader of His Holy Church, he denies Him. Was he threatened with death or imprisonment to proclaim his faith in Jesus? No, the tough fisherman of Galilee was intimidated by a young servant girl who exposed his self sufficient pride and cowardice. And as a cock crows he realizes the depth of his betrayal, that he has turned his back on the one who is Life Itself. Lord Jesus, forgive us for our denials, pride, self sufficiency and restore us to you.
My Kingdom is not of this World: Though He could have summoned ten thousands legions of angels to save him from Pontius Pilate and the Cross, the Lord submits Himself to the judgement of one who had no real authority over Him. He reveals that His kingdom is more than success, ambition, power and material gain in this life. His kingdom is about liberation from what keeps us truly in bondage, impoverished and trapped in sadness, our sins and how they isolate us from others, treating others like objects and obstacles instead of gifts and opportunities. He shows us that His kingdom is to serve and not be served yet so often we plug our ears and silence the word of the Lord. My Jesus, we are in this world but not of this world, unbind me from what is not of you and keep my eyes fixed on the kingdom that is to come.

Barabbas. What joy the criminal must have felt as he heard his name cheered and demanded to be set free! A man long condemned to languish in a prison cell, left to rot and be forgotten in the sands of history, suddenly is proclaimed by his own people as their ransom, their chosen, the one favoured to the scourged man who stands beside Pilate. There is a strange irony here that Barabbas, whose name means the son of the father, is spared from death, while the Only Begotten Son of the Father is handed over to die. Abraham long ago said to Isaac “God himself will provide a lamb of his own” for sacrifice, now that lamb has come forth, the judgement is passed, God’s lamb will die but Barabbas will live, we dare to hope he came to know the Lord Jesus and seek forgiveness before his end....

Ecce Homo! The words of Pilate that will echo throughout eternity, Ecce Homo, Behold the Man! Here stands the new Adam, scourged, beaten, spat upon, a man of sorrows, a crown of cruel thorns pressed into His skull, His ears bombarded with endless insults and curses, His eyes blinded with tears as He watches His family rejecting the love He sought to give. How often does Jesus stand in our midst, in the poor, in the undesirable, in those we will not forgive, in those who we want to hate, and He is hidden within them but we are blinded
because of our prejudices and hard heartedness? Lord Jesus, forgive us for not loving you hidden within our brothers and sisters.

**Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.** How strange the ways God proclaims His truth in the most unexpected of situations, that a condemned and accursed man, a carpenter and rabbi, would be declared by the most powerful empire in the world to be the true king of the universe! Little wonder the chief priest objects, this is an insult, this is a basest of embarrassments, our Messiah was suppose to destroy the yoke of Rome, not die under its cruel justice! And so now the whole world sees the Son of David, whose kingly and priestly blood drips upon the earth He once created, now being made anew through His sacrifice. Jesus is our king, but does He reign in our hearts?

**The Seamless Cloak.** The cast of dice wins a roman soldier a tremendous prize, the seamless cloak of the King of the Jews! Again prophecy is fulfilled, “they parted my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” His cloak resembles the tunic wore by the high priest of the Jews, for Jesus is the true High Priest, now offering the perfect sacrifice for sins. His cloak is also a symbol of His indivisible kingdom and what His Church is to be. The Church has been torn apart through the ages yet still she stands. Let us never tire of praying for the unity of all Christians, that we may all be one! Popes, bishops and patriarchs can do much to make this possible, but what will you and I do to restore unity among our Church, family and friends?

**Behold your Mother!** For so much of the Gospels Jesus can appear cruel and indifferent to His Mother. Even here He does not offer her words of comfort. He allows her to experience the sword that Simeon said would pierce her very soul. But perfect Son that He is, He gives her over to the care of His best friend, to guard, love and protect until the day Jesus assumes her into Heaven. But Jesus is also giving Mary to each of us to be our mother, for she loves us and we can fly to her for protection because she knows a suffering much deeper
than our own; she knew on that Friday afternoon that God died, and it is only by His grace that at the cross her station keeping, stood the mournful mother weeping, loving Jesus to the last.

It is Finished! The Passover of the Jews has 4 cups of wine that are drunk throughout the sacrificial meal. Jesus does not finish the 4th cup during the Last Supper; He says He will drink it anew when He enters the kingdom of His Father. After He says I thirst, sour wine it placed on His lips with a hyssop branch and now the 4th cup has been drunk, the sacrifice is complete, the Lord Jesus passes over to His Father’s kingdom, but first He must experience death, to free those who have long awaited his triumphal arrival among the dead. It is finished; we are now children of God.

The Pierced Side- From the side of Christ flows Water and Blood, the gifts of Baptism and Eucharist to the Church. Today the Church is born! Just as God created Eve from the opened side of Adam, so now does the new Adam give birth to the new Eve, the Holy Catholic Church. Even in death the Lord provides for us, when we receive the Eucharist once again let us remember how He poured out His life for the salvation of us all.

Laid in the Tomb- Now Christ sleeps in the heart of the earth. What a strange sight, the one who was there with the Father and Holy Spirit to create all things now rests in death, creation has received into its embrace its creator! The affection shown by His mother, by St John, by the holy women and Nicodemus remind us of how precious a gift it is to have Jesus in our lives. May we ask the Lord’s forgiveness when we have been indifferent to His love and careless in our relationship with Him. May we never grow weary of seeking His forgiveness and rejoicing in His mercy.

BUT is this the end of the story? Is all hope abandoned? As a way to end our meditation and remind us that death is not the end, but only the glorious beginning, I leave you with a poem that St. Theresa Benedicta of the Cross wrote
about a dream she had where Queen Esther visited her and told her what took place after Christ descended into hell...

Like all who faithfully have served the Lord
As their ancestors did, we have waited there in peace,
Still far from the light, so always in longing.
But there came a day when, through all of creation,
There occurred a fissure. All the elements seemed
To be in revolt, night enveloped the world at noon.
But in the midst of the night there stood
as if illuminated by lightning, a barren mountain
and on the mountain a cross on which someone hung
Bleeding from a thousand wounds; a thirst came over us
To drink ourselves well from this fountain of wounds.
The cross vanished into night, yet our night
Was suddenly penetrated by a new light,
Of which we had never had any idea: a sweet, blessed light.
It streamed from the wounds of that man
Who had just died on the cross, now he stood in our midst.
He himself was the light,
The eternal light, that we had longed for from of old,
The Father’s reflection and the salvation of the people.
He spread his arms wide and spoke
With a voice full of heavenly timbre:
Come to me all you have faithfully served
The Father and lived in hope
Of the redeemer; see he is with you,
He fetches you home to his Father’s kingdom.
What happened then, there are no words to describe.
All of us who had awaited blessedness,
We were now at our goal-in the heart of Jesus.