

A Service to Celebrate the Lenten Journey – Together!
29 March 2020

There are eight sections to the service today.

Seven Readings, based on each day of Holy Week, beginning Monday.

Each reading will be followed by a brief prayer, then a song, each of which will reflect the theme of the reading.

There will be silence for breath between each reading, then we begin with the next day.

We'll do that seven times.

Then the eighth section will contain a brief reflection on the readings, a hymn of thanksgiving, a commissioning prayer and a Sending Song.

Thank you to everyone for participating in this service today.

Our Opening Hymn VU121, CP179

Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery Verses 1,2,3, 5th Sunday

**Tree of Life and awesome mystery,
in your death we are reborn
though you die in all of history,
still you rise with every morn, still you rise with every morn.**

**Seed that dies, to rise in glory,
may we see ourselves in you,
if we learn to live your story
we may die to rise anew, we may die to rise anew.**

**We remember truth once spoken,
love passed on through act and word,
every person lost and broken
wears the body of our Lord, wears the body of our Lord.**

**God of all our fear and sorrow,
God who lives beyond our death,
hold us close through each tomorrow,
love as near as every breath, love as near as every breath.**

First Reading – Mary Cosman

It was on the Monday
that religion got in the way.

An outsider would have thought
that it was a pet shop's fire sale.
And the outsider, in some ways,
wouldn't have been far wrong.

Only, it wasn't household pets,
it was pigeons that were being purchased,
And it wasn't a fire sale;
it was a rip-off stall in a holy temple
bartering birds for sacrifice.
And the price was something only the rich could afford.

No discounts to students, pensioners,
or social security claimants.

Then he,
the holiest man on earth,
went through the bizarre bazaar
like a bull in a china shop.
So the doves got liberated
and the pigeon sellers got angry.
And the police went crazy
and the poor people clapped like mad,
because he was making a sign
that God was for everybody,
not just for those who could afford him.
He turned the tables on Monday ...
The day that religion got in the way.

Monday – It was on the Monday that religion got in the way.

Loving God, save us from ourselves.

Remind us that we must focus on relationship, rather than rules when it comes to furthering the Kingdom of God.

Give us voices to speak up for injustice.

Show us the way to peace that we never allow religion to get in the way.

Loving God, save us from ourselves.

AMEN

Were You There? – VU144 CP192

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Please sing twice.

Pause for breath

Breathing In...and Out

Breathing In...and Out

Breathing In...and Out

Second Reading – Bill Silversides

It was on the Tuesday
that he let them have it.

If you had been there
you would have thought
that a union official was being taken to task
by a group of mobsters.
Or that the chairman of a multinational corporation
was being interrogated by left-wing activists
posting as shareholders.

They wanted to know why
and they wanted to know how.

They were the respectable men,
the influential men,
the establishment.

The questions they asked
ranged from silly schoolgirl speculations
about whether you would be a bigamist in heaven
if you had married twice on earth,
to what was the central rule of civilized behaviour.

They knew the answers already ...
or so they thought,
otherwise they would never have asked the questions.

And like most of us
they were looking for an argument
with no intention of a change of heart.

So he flailed them with his tongue ...
those who tried to look interested
but never wanted to be committed.

And that was on the Tuesday ...
the day when he let them ...
let us ...
have it.

Tuesday – It was on the Tuesday that he let them have it.

Gracious God, give us your strength.

Remind us that we must speak up for what is against your way; that we must speak for those whose voice is ignored.

Give us hearts that we may do your work in the world.

Show us the way to courage that you will always give us the rights words to say.

Gracious God, give us your strength.

AMEN

Were You There – VU144 CP192

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Please sing twice.

Pause for breath

Breathing In...and Out

Breathing In...and Out

Breathing In...and Out

Third Reading – Mary Elson

It was on the Wednesday
that they called him a wasteful person.

The place smelled like the perfume department
of a big store.

It was as if somebody had bumped an elbow
against a bottle
and sent it crashing to the floor,
setting off the most expensive stink bomb on earth.

But it happened in a house,
not in a shop.

And the woman who broke the bottle
was no casual afternoon shopper.
She was the poorest of the poor,
giving away the only precious thing she had.

And he sat still
while she poured the liquid all over his head ...
an unnecessary aftershave
on a full crop of hair and a bearded chin.

And those who smelled it,
and those who saw it,
and those who remembered
that he was against extravagance,
called him a wasteful person.

They forgot
that he was also the poorest of the poor.

And they who had much
and who had given him nothing,
objected to a pauper giving him everything.

Jealousy was in the air
when a poor woman's generosity
became an embarrassment to their tight-fistedness.

That was on the Wednesday,
when they called him a wasteful person.

Wednesday – It was on a Wednesday that they called him a wasteful person.

Extravagant God, save us from our fears.

Remind us that we must not hoard anything, especially our faith, our grace and our love. Remind us to buy only what we need.

Give us strength to give without expecting anything in return.

Show us the way to peace that we share extravagantly with others through our love, our life, and your blessings.

Extravagant God, save us from our fears. AMEN

Were You There – VU144 CP192

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Please sing twice.

Pause for breath

Breathing In...and Out

Breathing In...and Out

Breathing In...and Out

Fourth Reading – Ron Ulrich

It was on the Thursday
that he became valuable.

He hadn't anything to sell ...
not since leaving his hammer and saw three years earlier.
Needless to say,
he could build a set of trestles
or hang a couple of shelves at the drop of a hat,
no bother at all.

But he wasn't into making things.
Not now.

He was into ... well ... taking, I suppose.
And listening
and healing
and forgiving
and encouraging ...
all the things for which there's no pay
and the job centre has not advertisements.

So his work wasn't worth much.
Nor, indeed, was he.
For, not being well dressed
or well heeled or well connected,
he wouldn't have attracted many ticket holders
had he been put up for raffle.
But he had a novelty value ...
like the elephant man or the fat lady
or the midget at the circus.
Put him on a stage and he might be interesting to look at.
Sell him to the circus
with the promise of some tricks
and there could be some money in it.

It was on the Thursday
that he became valuable.

Thursday – It was on the Thursday that he became valuable.

Beloved God, save us from our feelings of inferiority.

Remind us that we gain our strength, our worth, our value from you. You provide us with everything we need to know for salvation.

Give us strength to understand our worth and our value; not through the lenses of society, but your lenses of perfection.

Show us the way to peace that we may show others their worth just as you have shown us ours.

Beloved God, save us from our feelings of inferiority. AMEN

Were You There – VU144 CP192

Were you there when they pierced him in the side?

Were you there when they pierced him in the side?

Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they pierced him in the side?

Please sing twice.

Pause for breath

Breathing In...and Out

Breathing In...and Out

Breathing In...and Out

Fifth Reading – Ev Cutts

It was on the Friday
that they ended it all.

Of course,
they didn't it one by one.
They weren't brave enough.
All the stones at the one time
or no stones thrown at all.

They did it in crowds ...
in crowds you can feel safe
and lose yourself
and shout things
you would never shout on your own,
and do things
you would never do
if you felt the camera was watching you.

It was a crowd in the church that did it,
and a crowd in the civil service that did it,
and a crowd in the street that did it,
and a crowd on the hill that did it.

And he said nothing.

He took the insults,
the bruises,
the spit on the face,
the tongs on the back,
the curses in the ears.
He took the sign of his friends turning away,
running away.

And he said nothing.

He let them do their worst
until their worst was done,
as on Friday they ended it all ...
and would have finished themselves
had he not cried,
"Father, forgive them ..."

And began the revolution.

Friday – It was on the Friday that they ended it all.

Holy God, we thank you for your courage.

Remind us of our own strength when we feel weak and frightened.

Give us strength to stand up, even when that means standing alone.

Show us the way to peace that we may know you more deeply as we understand all that you have given us.

Holy God, we thank you for your courage. AMEN

Were You There – VU144 CP192

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Please sing twice.

Pause for breath

Breathing In...and Out

Breathing In...and Out

Breathing In...and Out

Sixth Reading – Catherine Ripley

It was on the Saturday
that he was not there.

Those who don't like corpses
can't stay away from graveyards,
unless there's some prohibition to stop them
revisiting the dead end
of their hopes and their dreams.

It's as if they think
that should the voice speak again,
it will speak there
or a sunbeam will dance
or a flower will shoot
and give a sign of misinterpreted life.

But close the cemetery,
or confine, through custom or constraint,
the wailing ones to the house
and it looms larger ...
the loss,
the lostness,
the losers.

Men shiver in an upstairs room,
warm though the day is.
Women weep in an uncharmed circle.

Memory is forced on memory.
The mind's eye tries to trace
the profile and the face,
the smile,
the gentle twitching of the nose ...
and fails.

And a panic sets in
because it seems he can't be remembered.
Was he ever known?

It was on the Saturday
that he was not there.

Saturday – It was on the Saturday that he was not there...

Holy God, we thank you for your sacrifice.

Remind us of our ability to remember and rejoice in you.

Give us strength to share your story with all we encounter.

Show us the way to peace that we may always remember everything you gave for us, that we may know eternal life in you.

Holy God, we thank you for your sacrifice. AMEN

Wait for the Lord – VU22 CP94

Wait for the Lord, God's day is near.

Wait for the Lord, be strong, take heart!

Please sing four times.

Pause for breath

Breathing In...and Out

Breathing In...and Out

Breathing In...and Out

Seventh Reading – Sandra Barrett

It was on the Sunday
that he pulled the corn.

They arrived with flowers,
shuffling through the dawn
as the dawn snuffed out
the last candles of night.
Their faces destroyed their belief
that yesterday would always be better than tomorrow,
despite what he said.
He would not say it again,
so why bother to believe him on that score?

And the flowers,
they too were silent witnesses to disbelief.
Like the grass,
they were cut to be dried to death,
cut off from the root,
the bulb, the source of life.
He was the flower they cherished,
the flower now perished
whose fate the lilies of the field,
now tight in hand,
would re-enact.

So when they passed the crouched figure at the end of the road,
they thought little of him,
scarcely seeing his form through their tears.
Had they looked even a little,
they would have seen a man
letting grain fall through his fingers,
dropping to the earth
to die and rise again.

It was on the Sunday
that he pulled the corn.

Sunday – It was on the Sunday that he pulled the corn.

Holy God, we thank you for loving us.

Remind us of our need to seek you everywhere, in every place.

Give us strength to see you in everyone we encounter, regardless of who they are and what they look like.

Show us the way to peace that we may always seek you, find you, and live in you as you live in us.

Holy God, we thank you for loving us. AMEN

Sing Amen – VU431 CP336

Sing Amen! **Amen we praise your name, O God**

Sing Amen! **Amen we praise your name, O God**

Sing Amen! **Amen Amen! Amen Amen!**

Amen we sing your praise, O God

Please sing three times.

Reflection: It was during that last week...

A Hymn of Thanksgiving – MV188, I Thank You Thank You, Jesus

I thank you, thank you Jesus, I thank you, thank you Jesus,

I thank you, thank you Jesus in my heart.

I thank you, thank you Jesus, I thank you, thank you Jesus,

I thank you, thank you Jesus in my heart.

I can't live without you, I can't live without you,

I can't live without you, in my heart.

I can't live without you, I can't live without you,

I can't live without you, in my heart.

I love you, love you Jesus, I love you, love you Jesus,

I love you, love you Jesus in my heart.

I love you, love you Jesus, I love you, love you Jesus,

I love you, love you Jesus in my heart.

Prayers of the People

For what are we thankful this day?

For what do we need help from God this day?

For whom do we pray this day?

Gathering our prayers and praises together we pray in the way that Jesus taught us.

Our father -- --

Commissioning

As we go forth from this time of worship,
our loving and compassionate God is with us.

**As we become aware of our need to change,
God supports us.**

**As we find courage to walk the faithful path,
God journeys with us.**

**When we are tempted to turn back,
God renews our vision.**

**When we joyfully follow the way of Jesus,
God celebrates with us!**

As we make this Lenten journey,
God's courage and peace will be ours!

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Sending Hymn – MV 90 Don't Be Afraid

Don't be afraid, My Love is stronger

My love is stronger than your fear.

Don't be afraid. My Love is stronger.

And I have promised, promised to be always near.

Please sing twice.

Worship Resources:

Readings from Stages on the Way (Wild Goose Publications, Iona Community)

Hymns from Voices United and More Voices.

Commissioning Prayer from Gathering, Year A, Lent

Responsive Prayers for each day written by Reverend Andrea L. Brennan