



Good Friday



A TIME OF DEEP REMEMBRANCE AND GRATITUDE FOR LOVE

To love or to have loved – this suffices. Demand nothing more. There is no other pearl to be found in the dark folds of life.

These words were quoted by Victor Hugo who fought for social justice and equality for the masses in France in the 1800s. This same purpose is found in the events of Holy Week's theme of the triumph over darkness, and the capturing of love and freedom gained by the giving of love for love.

Mary Pellegrino gives her reflective summary as:
*The Paschal Mystery as we know is this pattern of life, death and new life. That really is the pattern of all creation and embedded in the pattern are the glimmers of hope, the experiences of loss, and everything we would hold true. So that is the journey we are all on together.*¹

What poets, musicians and artists have given from their creative ventures demonstrates insights into the humanity of Jesus as He lived and eventually faced His impending death. Rembrandt's *The Three Crosses* is etched in a darkness and light mode; Giotto (1305) painted the crucifixion as an atonement and depicts his own feelings of pain and suffering. Sombre music by Handel and Bach provides the call to the profundity and sanctity of its mystery. The modern classical musician/composer Karl Jenkins in 2004 gave us *Requiem; Dies Irae* which provides us a glimpse into the dramatic aspects of the hideous event with the opening words: *Day of wrath and doom impending.*

There is a plethora of inspiring material that highlights the graphic intensity of Good Friday. Poets wax eloquent with mood, emotions, and movement. Denise Levertov writes of the humanity of Jesus:

***A dark, still young, very intelligent face, a soul-mirror gaze of deep understanding, unjudging.
That face, in extremis, would have clenched its teeth in a grimace not shown in even the great crucifixions.
The burden of humanness (I begin to see) exacted from Him***

***that He taste also the humiliation of dread,
cold sweat of wanting to let the whole thing go,
like any mortal hero out of his depth,
like anyone who has taken herself back.
The painters, even the greatest, don't show how,
in the midnight Garden,
or staggering uphill under the weight of the Cross,
He went through with even the human longing
or love not the hideous betrayals humans commit
nor the faithless weakness of friends, and surely
not the anticipation of death (not then, in agony's grip)
was Incarnation's heaviest weight,
but this sickened desire to renege,
to step back from what He, Who was God,
had promised Himself, and had entered
time and flesh to enact.
Sublime acceptance, to be absolute, had to have welled
up from those depths where purpose
drifted for mortal moment.***²

Jesus in the prime of life was betrayed, shamed, arrested and tortured. His life also was surrounded by risk, coincidence, surprise, accident, chemistry and chaos as are intrinsic to human beings. For deep love, Jesus' death was not something to be embraced with subtle joy. To be unsheathed of our body is one tearing, terrifying act; it is an awful thing no matter who it happens to. It is a stinking, grief-ridden, crushing thing that all death is. (George McCauley sj)

Good Friday is a time of deep remembrance and gratitude for love, how it could and does change the world. We celebrate Good Friday remembering that Jesus' acceptance and suffering pave the way for each of us as we make our own Paschal Journey through life. Jesus in His life and death was able to suffer diminishment and let go of His life – His Passover into new life. He demonstrated for us the need not only to give our lives but also to give our deaths.

To love or have loved suffices.

Michele Shipperley rsj

¹ Pellegrino, Mary (2022) – Along a Paschal Journey, Session 1, Our Current Reality: Naming the Moment.

² Levertov, Denise (2009) - Salvator Mundi: Via Crucis: Poetry of the Passion 5 – Incarnation's heaviest weight.