

Light Candle

Call to Worship

We gather here this day with humble and contrite hearts. We come together as people who seek to understand the meaning of service, suffering and sacrifice. We are drawn by the magnetism of the drama of the Cross, and Christ's offering himself in love to each of us. We come, once again, to grapple with the meaning of your word and will for our lives in the presence of your supreme act of compassion. Come, let us worship God.

Hymn MP 465 Meekness and majesty

Prayer

Gracious God, your love is a light in our darkness, vulnerable, yet unquenchable. We would stand with Christ, in the midst of the horrors of this world where betrayal and death constantly threaten your love and peace. May we be Disciples of Light and praise you daily for all you are doing. With gratitude and thankfulness we think of you now as you go through all that must be done, for our sake. In your Holy name, we pray. AMEN.

Hymn MP 988 How deep the Father's love for us

Jesus is Arrested

When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they said.

Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go." This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."^[a]

Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

Judas

Tonight, we gathered for the Passover and our “king,” our “son of David,” our “Messiah” stripped, wrapped a towel around his waist, and washed our feet. What sort of king plays at being a servant? What sort of saviour kneels before his disciples and washes the filth from their feet? Again and again he had missed the moment, but it was then, when I saw him grovelling before us, that I realised I must act. We needed to know if he was the Messiah. If he refused, well then I would force the issue. I would spark the revolution, and we would see if we had offered our faith foolishly. It was easy enough. You Pharisees were looking for a way to bring him down; we all knew that. A word in the right ear, a plan whispered discreetly, and you thought you had eliminated a problem while I knew I had started something bigger than any of us could imagine. And to think! To think you hypocritical fools paid thirty pieces of silver to start the revolution you so fear! You Pharisees are the first to fill our coffers! He knew, you know. He knew what I planned! I don’t know how, I don’t know when he learned, but at supper he told us all that one would betray him—a strong word, but I thought then that he understood. After all, he handed me the bread dipped in wine. He must have understood my plan, he must have known the test before him, he must have! So why didn’t he act? Why? But, You Pharisees got it all wrong! We were ready—the people were ready! That angry crowd in the garden, Peter had his sword out in an instant. Took an ear, Peter did! Took an ear..... But he rebuked them. “No more of this!” he called . . . and the others listened. Our moment had finally arrived; and the crowds would have turned, followed him to a new world. But he stopped them, even healed that dog’s ear. Then he asked, “Am I leading a rebellion?” “Yes!” I wanted to shout. “Yes! Again and again you’ve told us so. Now act on it!” But instead he surrendered meekly. And we fled. It all went wrong. There is no revolt. You have condemned him to die. Through my word, my kiss, you have caught, tried, and condemned him.

“O Almighty King in Heaven, what have I done? He’s just a man, an innocent man! And instead of rebellion, I have his blood on my hands. Instead of a Messiah, thirty pieces of silver. Oh, I have sinned. Betrayal he called it? Yes, betrayal and blood for thirty pieces of silver.

Prayer

Loving and Gracious God, This is the day when life is raw, quivering, terrifying: The day of numbed emotions, the day of blunt nails and splintered wood, of bruised flesh and red blood. The day we loathe, when hopes are crushed. The day we long for, when pretenses fall away— Because, the worst that we can do cannot kill the love of God. In this place and time we relive the story, we

prepare our hearts, we offer our vulnerability, our understanding of what it means, our place in the story. AMEN.

Peter's First Denial

Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

"You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" she asked Peter.

He replied, "I am not."

It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

Peter

When we were in the garden, I stood by his side, though we were outnumbered. I had my sword out before any others. I made sure they knew we could fight when I cut off that servant's ear. I didn't retreat. Well, at least not until they arrested him. I didn't mean to leave him. . . .

After that I tried to follow him. I did! I followed him to Caiaphas' courtyard. I said to him that even if all the others fell away, I never would. And so I followed him. It was hopeless to do so. I knew that it was all over, that we were all marching towards death—his death. But I followed. I said I would. "Even if I have to die with you!" I said.

It was cold there. They had a fire going in the courtyard, but I couldn't get too near—too many people were crowded around it and I didn't think it was wise to stand so fully in the light. They were an angry group. And then that servant girl! A sly thing! So pert, so insistent. "You also were with that Jesus of Galilee!" she shrilled so that everyone heard. It took me by surprise. She forced an answer before I could even think. "I don't know what you're talking about", I said. And really, I didn't. I mean, yes of course I was with Jesus, but not right then, him inside, me outside . . . I answered before I could think....said words I can never take back.

The High Priest Questions Jesus

Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

"I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."

When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded.

"If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" ²Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Hymn MP 619 Such love

Peter's Second and Third Denials

Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?"

He denied it, saying, "I am not."

One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

Peter

I thought it best I stand somewhere else after that, and I moved to the gateway where it was a bit darker and where people seemed to have a little more information about what was happening inside. People were coming and going, and I thought I could learn something, and, well, I thought that perhaps that girl would forget about me and think I had left. Then another person, someone there at the gate, insisted, simply insisted, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." Again it took me by surprise, and, well, I didn't want them to think I had actually lied before so I just said that I didn't really know the man. I mean, how many of us really knows someone? Did any of us really know him? So that's what I said to them. I was beginning to get angry. So I lied again. I got really angry when a group of them came at me and pointed out my accent. "Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away." I admit now that I yelled, and I said "I don't know the man," because, well, what I meant was that just because I have this accent, doesn't mean I know him, and, well . . . I lied again . . . he said I would disown him. He said I would deny him three times before the rooster crowed. I didn't mean to. I never meant to. I had made all those promises to him, to myself. I tried, I tried! But I failed. He was right. I did disown him. That night. Just now. Three times. And now every rooster crow shouts my faithlessness to the world. What have I done? (in despair).

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, when our faith has been tested we confess that we have betrayed and denied You, forgotten and doubted You, like Peter. We have betrayed You with our silence, when we have failed to proclaim Your Good News, when we have failed to live out Your teachings, when we have failed to love our neighbours as ourselves. Forgive us, Gracious God, and help us to truly repent. Help us to remember Your sacrifice, Your love, and to know Your forgiveness. AMEN.

Hymn MP 162 From heaven you came helpless babe

Jesus Before Pilate

Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness they did not enter the palace, because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. So

Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

"If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you."

Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."

"But we have no right to execute anyone," they objected. This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

"What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. ³⁹ But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?"

They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

Pilate

Fools! What fools! And he's the biggest of them all. A fool and a dreamer. Any fool, myself included, could see he is innocent of these charges. Granted, there is something about him, despite his mild face and meek demeanor. I wonder . . . perhaps his dreams do speak truth, do bear heeding. . . . It's his certainty of purpose, his very inner stillness that commands. But sedition? Rebellion? More likely he offended their sense of power and threatened their purses than offended the empire and threatened Roman rule. But these Jews are completely incomprehensible, completely pig-headed! They would have his death or none at all! I offered them a choice between him and Barabbas a known murderer! But they would have none of it.....those fools, all of them!

Jesus Sentenced to Be Crucified

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face.

Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, “Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him.” When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!”

As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, “Crucify! Crucify!”

But Pilate answered, “You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him.”

The Jewish leaders insisted, “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.”

When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. “Where do you come from?” he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. “Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?”

Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”

From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.”

When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge’s seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon.

“Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews.

But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”

“Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked.

“We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered.

Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

Pilate

Without a crucifixion, how am I to keep them entertained? The Jews need some release for their emotions. Without this focus for their anger, it could all erupt into true rebellion. Easy enough to quell, but rather messy, and certainly not something I would want word of, to get back to Rome. No, certainly not. And . . . well, I do admit I like blood sport as much as anyone else. A little torture, a little flogging, an execution here and there keeps you feeling alive—and certainly keeps those Jews in line. But to cast this one in the lead role? Really, those Pharisees were asking quite a lot of me! Their accusations were so outrageous that even he refused to dignify them with a response. His very silence proclaimed his innocence. Yet those Jews (shake head) were so insistent. I did my best to free him, and in the end I washed my hands of him. Before the crowd I shouted, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. It is your responsibility!” And they shouted back, “Let his blood be on us and on our children!”

Yes, yes, I am innocent of his blood. I am perfectly innocent. And when I could find nothing to uphold the charges, I was forced, simply forced to hand him over to be crucified.

Silence

The Crucifixion of Jesus

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: jesus of nazareth, the king of the jews. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.”

Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

“Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.”

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said,

“They divided my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.”

So this is what the soldiers did.

The Soldier

I saw him from a distance, walking, often stumbling. He wore a cap of thorns on His head, and I saw the scourge marks on his body. He was completely covered in blood. I wondered how he had the strength to move, for I knew it must have been extremely painful to make any kind of motion. They had forced a man to help carry his cross, because he was too weak to do it all by Himself, and they did not want him to die on the way.

They brought him before me. I didn’t even think. I just did what I had always done. First, I stripped him of his robes. He did not cry out, but he winced from the pain. All the wounds on his back had been reopened, and he began to bleed profusely.

I wondered what his crime was, what was it they had convicted him of, that he deserved to die in this grisly manner.

But then, caught in my own thoughts, I heard the people and my fellow soldiers yelling at me, “Nail Him! Crucify Him!” He looked at me then, and seeing the nails in my hand, he nodded his head and closed his eyes.

So I did my soldier's duty.

The other soldiers mocked him and spat on him as he was being nailed to the cross. The spectators did not help either, they shouted at him and insulted him as he laid there motionlessly.

Then, a sign came. A fellow soldier brought it forward. It said: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

"What is that?" I asked the other soldier.

He merely snickered and replied, "His title..."

"Hail, King of the Jews," he laughed, as he nailed it above the criminal's head. Then, he spat in his face.

I almost could not look, it was too gruesome.....

Then, they lifted Him up.

(The Crucifixion of Jesus Cont.)

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman,^[b] here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Hymn MP 755 When I survey the wondrous Cross

The Death of Jesus

Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Silence

Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

The Soldier

Many of the Jewish priests and religious leaders came and mocked Him. They told Him to come down from the cross if he truly was the Son of God. Then, I heard Him cry out – “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

I noticed it was dark. It could not be the evening; could not be. I later found it was mid-day. Yet it was dark with an eeriness I'd not known before. For three hours it went on, then suddenly there was the most awful scream that I have ever heard: "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?"

It was so terrible, I found myself trembling with the shock, and all the crowd fell silent, dumb with awe.

It was too much. I tried to hold back the tears.

I did not know who this man was but I knew He was innocent of any crime.

Then another shout; but this time different, Oh quite different. More like a cry of triumph, of victory - "It's Finished!" Then, he bowed His head and died.

At that moment, I knew – I understood who He was.

“Truly,” I said aloud, “this man was the Son of God!”

The Burial of Jesus

Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about thirty-five kilograms. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was near by, they laid Jesus there.

Mary

Yesterday I watched them mock him, flog him, spit on him, force him to drag his own cross, pound nails into his hands and feet, slash his side. Oh the pain...of seeing all that! I saw others wrap him in linen, lay him in a tomb, roll the stone in place, seal him alone in the dark. My Son...my beautiful, precious son....

Did God cry when the angels sang, knowing his only child's birth would end in sacrifice? Does watching your Son die, hurt just as much, when you're divine? Does it?.....does it? I suppose, if I had listened closely all those years ago, I too would have known it would end like this. Simeon told me a sword would pierce my soul....he was right.....And those gifts the Magi brought? Gold for a king, yes, incense for an offering, and myrrh for a burial. A burial..... my Son.....God's Son is dead (bow head).

Blow out Candle

Quiet Music to end service

Light Candle

Call to Worship

Hymn MP 465 Meekness and majesty

Prayer

Hymn MP 988 How deep the Father's love for us

Jesus Arrested (John 18:1-14)

Judas

Prayer

Peter's first Denial (John 18:15-18)

Peter

The High Priest Questions Jesus (John 18:19-24)

Hymn MP 619 Such love

Peter's second and third denial (John 18:25-27)

Peter

Prayer of confession

Hymn MP 162 From heaven you came helpless babe

Jesus before Pilate (John 18:28-40)

Pilate

Jesus sentenced to be Crucified (John 19:1-16)

Pilate

Silence

The Crucifixion of Jesus (John 19:17-24)

The Soldier

The Crucifixion of Jesus continued (John 19:25-27)

Hymn MP 755 When I survey the wondrous Cross

The death of Jesus (John 19:28-37)

Silence

The death of Jesus cont.

The Soldier

The Burial of Jesus (John 19:38-42)

Mary

Blow out Candle

Quiet music to end Service