

# Good Friday of The Lord's Passion, March 30, 2018

Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Psalms 31:2, 6, 12–13, 15–16, 17, 25; Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9; John 18:1–19:42



by Terri Steinberg



Today, we reflect on the Passion and death of our Lord, one of the most talked about executions of an innocent man in all of history. In today's Gospel from John (Jn 18:1--19:42), we hear about the horrific torture Jesus endured for us, and wonder how so many could stand by, demand that He be crucified and then watch? Then I think about how the death penalty is still in practice now, in the year 2018, and wonder how we can allow this cycle of violence to continue.

I think about Mary, his mother, who sat helplessly at Jesus's side, watching as her son was beaten, and hung on the cross in such a horrific way. I have known her suffering as my own son faced 3 separate execution dates for a crime he did not commit. It is a pain no mother should have to endure.

I think about Jesus's friends who turned away, like Peter did out of fear, and also of John who stayed with Mary. Are we Peter, or are we John? Who would Jesus expect us to be?

Our God in Heaven sent the Son to teach lessons of mercy, justice, love, and compassion. All of these lessons rolled together are what is needed in response to those who offend us. The killing of another human being- a child of God, no matter how flawed- will never undo a crime that was committed or honor those lessons Jesus came to teach. The question should not be 'do they deserve to die for their crime,' the question is do we have a right to kill them and most importantly, do we have to? The death penalty should not be about what crime they committed but instead about who WE are and what WE do in response.

In Psalm 31, we ask God to rescue us and give refuge, so we must show mercy and give refuge to the least of our brothers and sisters- those who have sinned against us. There is nothing merciful in the use of the death penalty. We are each imperfect souls, worth so much more than our worst mistake, and we believe in redemption through our Lord. In the Lord's prayer, we ask God to "forgive us our trespasses" and promise to "forgive those who trespass against us". If we expect forgiveness, we first must forgive! Jesus came to teach us a better way and died for our sins in the hope of our salvation. He taught us to "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34-35) and "Whatever you do to the least of my sisters and brothers, you do to Me" (Mt 25:40).

As you reflect on the passion of our Lord, recognize that all life has dignity and worth, and the use of the death penalty contradicts our belief that ALL life is sacred. Please join with the Catholic Mobilizing Network to respect all life, calling for an end to the use of the death penalty. Our faith calls us to be better.

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