

Renewed in Hope

Holy Week: Hope in the Passion of Jesus

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.
Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance,
he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.

Because of this, God greatly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,
of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. [Philippians 2.6-11]

Video Summary

In Holy Week we contemplate the Passion of Jesus. The word *passion* leads us on different paths of reflection: firstly into the sufferings of Jesus and secondly into the passion that moved him: love for people in the love of God.

John in his Gospel, embodies the self-emptying of Jesus in the washing of his disciples' feet. He takes off his outer garments and does what a servant would do – not from compulsion, but out of willing choice. Pouring out not just water over their feet but his own love and life. John expresses it like this:

Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father.

Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. [13.1]

What does this 'loving to the end' mean? Loving until there is no more to give – to his last breath. And, he loved us to our end: our death, and our deaths.

One day we will die; but not alone. Jesus, our hope chose to enter this darkest of dark moments, loving us by his presence to our end – an end that is also, through him, a beginning. He has also chosen to be with us through all those other deaths we have experienced and will know before that final breath – our defeats, disappointments, and failures, past, present and to come.

So it is that the symbol of our faith is a cross. There are no easy answers here. How could a man hanging on a cross be an easy answer? What there is, is presence, his refusal to abandon us, his going with us through all those ends. Passion and compassion. Hope.

Some questions for groups

- What does Holy Week mean for you?
- How often do you think about your own death? What thoughts and feelings come up for you when you do?
- Along with the suffering of Jesus that we contemplate this week, are there also sources of hope for you in remembering his Passion? What are these?
- What else struck you in the video?

Exercises for personal prayer and reflection

Loving us to the end

What 'deaths' – pains, disappointments, losses or failures – do you enter Holy Week with? As you read and pray Jesus' Passion through this week, see him entering willingly into these deaths, moved by his love for you.

Letting go, to come alongside

The Son of God emptied himself to share fully in our humanity and to be with us in our struggles and our death. Ask God to show you anything he now invites you to let go of: any fearful holding on to control, convenience or possessions that prevents you living fully and compassionately.

Remember the workings of hope

As you look back over these weeks...

- What have you seen afresh about hope?
- What sense do you have of God's hope for you?
- In what ways is God inviting you to be hope for others?
- How are you being invited to step into hope?

○ King of the Friday
Whose limbs were stretched on the cross;
○ Lord who did suffer the bruises, the wounds, the loss,
We stretch ourselves beneath the shield of thy might;
Some fruit from the tree of thy passion
Fall on us this night.

[An ancient Irish prayer]