

*In Nomine Jesu*

## **The Blood and the Water, the Body and the Tomb**

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

“O sorrow dread! Our God is dead, up on the Cross extended.”<sup>1</sup>

“*It is finished.*”<sup>2</sup> With these words, Jesus breathed out and gave up His Spirit. Some would have us believe that those were actually the last words Jesus ever said, and the last breath that He would ever draw. Of course, that’s not true, and we have plenty of witnesses who tell us that, including, of course, Jesus Himself. But for our readings today, Jesus is indeed dead. The Second person of the Trinity, God Himself, experienced death. The Source of Life, has had His own life snuffed out, at least for the moment.

Today we look at the final two Stations of the Cross where Jesus’ body is taken down from the cross and placed into the tomb. As we go through these texts, notice this truth which stands out. He is truly dead, and He has truly saved us. Our text begins:

*Then the Jews, since it was the day of preparation, in order that the body not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for it was a great day that Sabbath, asked Pilate in order to break their legs and remove them. Then the soldiers went and to be sure first broke the legs of the others who were crucified with Him. But coming to Jesus, as they saw that already He had died, they did not break His legs.*<sup>3</sup>

You’ve got to love those Jewish leaders and their laws. I can just picture Pilate getting even more frustrated and exasperated than what he already was. He does give them permission though.

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<sup>1</sup> “O Darkest Woe” by Fridrich Von Spee, Stz 2.

<sup>2</sup> John 19:30

<sup>3</sup> John 19:31-33

Just a few words on the background of this request: Our reading from Deuteronomy reveals both why the Jewish leaders were so insistent on Jesus being crucified and why they wanted Him being removed from the Cross. They wanted Him to die on a tree, because that meant He was cursed. But what exactly does it mean that Jesus was cursed? Well Paul helps out with this one.

In Galatians, Paul explains that Jesus actually became a curse for us. Or to put it another way, He put Himself specifically under the curse of the law, which means He was responsible for His own justification. Thankfully, Jesus didn't have any issues with His own justification.

However, if Jesus was left on the cross after hanging on the tree and therefore being cursed, then, according to Deuteronomy, the land would also be cursed. So He had to come down, which means that He also had to be dead. Pilate therefore sent out the soldiers to kill Him by breaking His legs.

But there was also a prophecy, from the Psalm that we heard today, that stated that not one of His bones would be broken. Since He was already dead, the soldiers didn't worry about breaking His legs, thereby fulfilling that prophecy.

All of this is to say, that even when He was dead, He was still fulfilling prophecies on our behalf. Of course, the Romans wanted to make sure that He was dead, which we hear about now in our text:

*But with the soldiers spear He was pierced in the side of Him, and came out of it immediately blood and water. And the one seeing it has witnessed, and truly has he witnessed, and this he knew that truly he said, in order also you might believe. And it happened in this way*

*in order as it was written it be fulfilled, "His bones will not be shattered." And again another word says, "They will look for themselves in Who they pierced."<sup>4</sup>*

Let's take some time and talk about this blood water issue, because it is an issue. And the issue basically comes down to this, what is being symbolized by the blood and the water? First though, let's deal with the physical issue.

Is it possible that this can happen? Without getting into too many grisly, technical details, yes it is. One of the many possible wounds that He was afflicted with could result in this build up around His heart. If you want to know more, there's plenty of studies out there to prove that it is plausible.

Onto the more interesting issue. What does it mean that water and blood came out? Well, the real question is, "Is it supposed to symbolize the Sacraments?" I would put forward that yes, it is symbolic of the Sacraments, and Martin Luther and Augustine also put that forward as well.

As you all know, the crucifixion is the central point in all of history. It is the point around which everything else circles. Those in the Old Testament were saved because the Crucifixion would eventually happen. We now are saved because it did happen.

However, God uses slightly different means now than He did in the Old Testament. Of course, first and foremost is His Word, which was, is, and will be as effective and true today as it was 4,000 years ago. But Jesus

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<sup>4</sup> John 19:34-37

gave us new means as well – specifically the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Here we see the symbols of both of those Sacraments flowing out of the body of the Word made flesh.

Now what does that matter? Well, it means that the deed has been done. It has truly been finished as Jesus said. The Sacraments have been opened and let loose from the Word. In Jesus taking the curse of the law on Himself, He has given us the Gospel. He has given us the Sacraments. Jesus took the sin of the world on Himself, and gave us His Word, His Baptism and His Body and Blood to save us.

It also proves that He was dead, really and truly. I don’t want to understate that, because it means that God truly died. This is perhaps one of the most mind-blowing things that happen in the Bible. The Second person of the Trinity, who with the Father and the Spirit, created all things, really, truly and actually died. And He did it to save us. We’ve got more to talk about though, so let’s keep moving.

*After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, concealed though through fear of the Jews, asked Pilate in order to remove the body of Jesus. And Pilate allowed it. Then he went and removed His body.*

Let’s give sneaky points where sneaky points are due. Joseph pulled a fast one over the other Jewish leaders here. It’s generally believed that he himself was actually on the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, and Nicodemus, who we’ll hear about in a moment, definitely was. So he got to Pilate first, asked first, and Pilate allows him to take Jesus’ body.

And so we get our eighth station of the cross: Jesus being taken down from the cross. By doing this, Joseph and Nicodemus made sure that Jesus’

body was given the proper burial and respect that He deserved. This was much preferable to whatever the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders had planned, and meant that the followers of Jesus would for sure know where He had been placed. Let's continue with the conclusion of our text.

*And also Nicodemus came, the one who had come to Him first in the night, bearing a mixture of myrrh of aloes weighing about a hundred litras. Then taking the body of Jesus they bound it with linen cloth of fragrant spices, just as was custom in the Jews burial preparations. And in the place where He was crucified was a garden, and in the garden was a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore then because of the preparation of the Jews near was the tomb in which they laid Jesus.<sup>5</sup>*

And now we come to the ninth and final station. Our Lord's body is laid to rest. In our image here, you can see Jesus being laid on the slab of stone that would usually be in such a tomb. Also, notice that the Cross is still close by. The tomb that Jesus was laid in was in a garden in the same place as the Cross. Therefore, it is possible that the very Cross that Jesus died on was indeed visible from where He was laid.

That being said, let's talk about the tomb itself. Specifically that the tomb was new and had never been used by anyone before this. John makes sure to point this out to us, which means that it must mean something. John, after all, loves having deeper meanings to most of the things that he put in his Gospel.

So what could he mean with this one? Well it was likely a show of honor for the deceased when His body was placed in an unused tomb. More than that though, hear what Paul wrote in his letter to the Colossians,

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<sup>5</sup> John 19:39-42

*“And He is the Head of the Body, the Church. He is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.”*<sup>6</sup> Jesus is going to be the Firstborn from among the dead. It only makes sense that He is the first One to use that tomb. This shows that He is the Head of the Church, of you, and that He will lead you up out of the crypt.

But, we shouldn't get too far ahead of ourselves. We have reached the end of the Stations of the Cross. You have seen Pilate judge Jesus, and receive His cross. You have seen Simon of Cyrene assist our Lord with His burden, and seen Jesus turn to the Daughters of Jerusalem. You have seen our Savior humiliated as the soldiers stripped His clothes and pierced Him with the nails that you deserved. You saw Him accomplish your salvation as He released His Spirit. Today, you have seen the boldness that Jesus inspired in Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, and have seen the foreshadowing of what is to come as Jesus is placed in the tomb.

We now take a rest from our march through the Stations of the Cross. We wait with baited breath for the dawn of the third day that is coming. But where Jesus' disciples at the time waited in despair, not knowing what would occur. We await in hope. We know what is coming. He told us He would come back, and we don't have much longer to wait.

**Now may the peace which passes all understanding, and which comes from the hope of our Lord's coming, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**

Stations of the Cross Lenten Series, 2015  
 Week 4, Stations 8 and 9  
 March 8, 2015  
 Psalm 34:15-22; Deuteronomy 21:22-23; John 19:31-42  
*Vicar Christopher M. Craig*  
*Soli Deo Gloria*

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<sup>6</sup> Colossians 1:18