

# GOOD FRIDAY: Prayer around the Cross

Karen Kent OSU

*Setting: darkness apart from candles around the church. Cross in the centre on the sanctuary. Spot light for the character when speaking, hanging head in shame for silence and when venerates the cross. Characters wear black and learn their lines. Narrator is sitting in the congregation – unseen using microphone.*

*Characters: two women, four men, narrator.*

*Musicians/singers for Taizé chant.*

*Props required: hammer & large nails; sign with INRI written on it; dice & tunic.*

**Opening Chant:** O Lord hear my prayer (Taizé)

P A U S E

**Narrator:** This afternoon we commemorated an eventful Friday in Jerusalem that happened over 2,000 years ago. A day that changed the course of history but at the time did the people really realise just what they were witnessing ... what they were part of ... how it would affect generations to come?

Let us reflect on what happened ... and how we even today sometimes perpetuate those awful events ...

P A U S E

(Enter two women)

**1st woman:** It was a great day in Jerusalem today I've never been part of anything like it before and I've been at a few crucifixions in my time. Some say he had done much good in his short life but he didn't keep our laws and what's more calling himself the Son of God ... who did he think he was? ... we have been waiting for years for the Messiah and he thinks he can come the son of a carpenter and make the claim!!! Huh!!!



**Man with sign:** I was here this afternoon ... with hammer and nails ready ... as I do at every crucifixion ... ready to make sure the offender was safely nailed to the cross ... I don't usually think about it ... it's just a job that I often do ... take my hammer and put the nails through the hands and the feet ...

P A U S E

Today I did the same ... but a strange feeling

came over me ... as I hit the nails today and watched the blood come from his hands and his feet ...

He was different to any other criminal we crucify ... He has done much good, brought comfort to people ... showed the way to those who were lost...

(turns and hangs head in shame)

Do you ever think you made the wrong decision ... that your actions have hurt and wounded another? ... that's what happened to me today ... I played my part in his death ... at times we all contribute to the wounding of others ... kick them when they are down ... when they are at their most vulnerable ...

(venerates the cross)

**Chant:** Jesus remember me (Taizé)

(Enter one man carrying board saying INRI)

**Man:** I was there today ... played my part ... added a final touch to the cross ... put up the sign saying 'King of the Jews' written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin just to make sure everyone understood who this man claimed to be ... and I nailed it above his head for all to see ...

P A U S E

I wonder why the Chief Priests asked Pilate to change what he had written

I'm glad I played my part ... added my voice to the jeering crowd calling for his death ... he had to go ...

P A U S E

**2nd woman:** I don't know ... he cured people, he performed miracles, he gave great example to all of us ... and what did we do? ... we called for his death ... went along with the crowd ... didn't stand up for what was right, for kindness, gentleness, for the one despised, for the one in need ...

(two women turn to each other and hang their heads in shame)

**1st woman:** Are you like me? ... afraid to stand up for the good ... for the one who may be different than most people yet seeks to bring change to our world ...

P A U S E

**2nd woman:** We can all hang our head in shame ... we have all been too scared to stand out from the crowd... to set ourselves apart ... afraid of what others would think of us ...

(two women move to venerate the cross)

**Chant:** Jesus remember me (Taizé)

(Enter one man carrying the nails and hammer)

... He had made a claim ... said he was a king ... yet he didn't live like a king ... he lived a humble life ... worked with Joseph ... then wandered around the towns preaching, performing miracles, feeding the hungry, bringing hope to people in despair ... welcoming the stranger ... He was different in many ways...

(man turns and hangs his head in shame)

I labelled him ... even though I didn't really know him ... put up my sign for all to see ... gave him no chance to respond ...

P A U S E

Do you ever label people because of where they live? ... or the colour of their skin? ... because of how they look? ... or the way they speak? ... or what job they do? ... what they own or don't own? ... we are all guilty ... we all label others without really knowing them...

(venerates the cross)

**Chant:** Jesus remember me (Taizé)

(Enter two men one carrying dice and clothing)

**1st Man:** I won the game ... a spontaneous game of chance ... won the prize.

I have his tunic ... we decided not to tear it so we gambled and I won. I'm glad I was there ... played my part in the actions of this afternoon ... I enjoyed the jeering, pushing him around, watching him struggle to carry his cross ... then being hung up to die ... naked on the cross ...

P A U S E

**2nd man:** But why? What did he do? Did he really deserve to die? Was it right to take all he had? Even his clothing ... to leave him with nothing ...

I hear he was a good man ... did nothing to hurt anyone ... yes he challenged the way we live, the way we act ... but is that so wrong ... did he really have to die ...?

(the men turn together and hang their heads in shame)

**1st man:** Are you like me? ... take pleasure in the sufferings of another ... take joy in winning at all costs ... no matter who gets trampled on ...

P A U S E

**2nd man:** We are all guilty ... when a man is down we take all he has ... we enjoy the game ... we play our part in destroying another ... in leaving them to suffer alone...

(turn together and venerate cross)

**Chant:** Jesus remember me (Taizé)

**Narrator:** Each of us can plead guilty today...guilty of the same crimes committed on that first Good Friday ... we might ask what is good about it?

PAUSE

It was good because Jesus went through all the pain and suffering – carrying the cross while the crowd jeered and shouted at him ... when he felt the nails go through his hands and feet ... when he watched them cast lots for his tunic ... when they hung up the

label above his head – he endured it all because he loved us ... loved us to his death ... a painful death on the cross ... and still we continue to commit the same crimes over and over again ... yet still he loves us and calls us to him ...

P A U S E

We invite you now if you wish to come forward to venerate the cross ... to come as sorrowful sinners towards the one who died because he loved ...

**Chant:** Ubi Caritas et Amor (Taizé)

(continuous during veneration)

It was a day of paradox ... in a moment of great evil the greatest good is revealed ... the forgiving love of the Father is made manifest at the moment of the ultimate human rejection as Jesus cries out 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do?'

The same paradox exists in our own lives ... we destroy the love Christ offers to us in our words and actions directed towards others ...

Today is a day to realise just how deep God's love is for us in the wounds of Jesus ... in his death for us ... the ultimate act of love ... to die for love of friends...

It is because of this love that together we can pray the prayer that Jesus taught the disciples ... the prayer he left for all people...it is our prayer of thanksgiving ... our prayer of petition ... our prayer of contrition ... **Our Father**

(background music on CD)

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