

*retreat
@home*

"It is finished."

DAY 5: FRIDAY

"It is finished."

PREPARE: Go to your chosen prayer place, settle down and become still. Take some deep breaths and slow your breathing. Relax and come to rest. God is here to meet with you.

OPEN: *I open my hands and say, "here I am God..."*
I open my ears and say, "I am listening God..."
I open my imagination and ask, "lead me God..."

ASK: Become aware of how you are feeling today, name those feelings out loud to God. Ask God for whatever you sense that you need in this time of prayer today.
Be bold to ask - God loves to give.

GOSPEL READING: John 19:23-30

Read today's Gospel passage through slowly two or three times until you have a clear sense of its flow.

MEDITATION: Golgotha is a higher place outside Jerusalem. There are a few people around, lingering in small groups, some watching the scene. Soldiers are sitting on the dusty ground, slightly bent, casting lots with tired expressions. There is distant chatter and muffled voices: talking about this man who has just carried the cross up here... about what one's heard about him.

Three crosses are towering over the plain. Their shape contrasts against the sky. The bodies of the men are weary and wounded: exposed and unprotected against the looks of bystanders.

Take some time to take in this scene, how people are moving around, watching the soldiers, listening to the sounds of steps and of voices. Can you see the maltreated bodies on the cross, can you even see their faces from where you are?

At the bottom of the cross in the middle, three women are standing close together: Mary (Jesus' mother), with her sister, and Mary

Magdalene. There is also a single disciple. What brought them here? What made them stay?

Then Jesus slowly lowers his head, looking at his mother:
"Woman, behold, your son."

How does she react?

He turns to his beloved disciple: *"Behold, your mother."*

Their eyes meet for a second, then Jesus' expression turns blank. He doesn't move. It seems to become very quiet... Someone's sobbing.

And then they hear his voice, breaking the silence: *"I thirst."* Someone quickly throws a sponge into a filled jug, watching as it soaks up the sour wine. The sponge gets spiked with a branch and arms lift it up high, a few drops dripping onto his breast. Watch Jesus drinking and swallowing.

You hear him say, *"It is finished."*

He bows his head, giving up his spirit. You watch how his breath leaves the body, his limbs becoming motionless.

Some people are quietly leaving, some look curiously at those staying. Clouds are passing by, there's a slight wind touching your skin. You remain there with him, at the bottom of the cross...

CONVERSATION: Coming out of your own imagining of the story, take a few moments to talk it over with God as if you were telling a friend about what just happened. What did you notice? What were the feelings that arose in you? Did anything surprise you? Was there anything uncomfortable? Do you sense yourself wanting to make any particular response?

ENDING: End your prayer, perhaps shaping one sentence that captures what you want to say to God. Move to somewhere different - make a hot drink - take a few moments to jot down your thoughts.

REVIEW & RELISH: If you are able to find another slot in your day, return to your prayer place, read the story and take the journey in your imagination once again. New things may emerge or you may simply find yourself relishing the earlier insights more deeply.

THREE KEY QUESTIONS:

HIS STORY - What comes up in Jesus' mind as he is about to say his last words "It is finished"? How do these words sound for you?

OUR STORY - What of my relationships have come to a halt or an end? In what areas have I given up sharing time, stories, ideas, and dreams?

MY STORY - How do I look at 'finished chapters' of my life? What feelings arise in me? Are there past situations that I'm still sad about or I wish had happened differently?

CREATIVE IDEAS: Jesus says in despair, "I thirst." Abiding with him in his suffering and loneliness, write down what you are thirsty for...

RETREAT ON THE MOVE: Fill a cup with wine (or vinegar, or water, or...) and place it near a cross in your house as a reminder of the story. Pour it away at 3pm, remembering Jesus' words in silence: "It is finished." Choose something that you'd like to offer at the bottom of the cross - a pebble, a twig, a flower, something written, etc. You can also cover the cross with a dark cloth.

EXPLORE FURTHER:

Words of Psalm 22 are quoted several times in today's reading. Read over the whole Psalm - what connections do you discover?



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