

Here is your son ... Here is your mother

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Homily prepared for Good Friday service

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Read John 19:25-27

Seven Last words in the Gospels: 3 in Luke, 3 in John and 1 in Mat/Mk

Three of these (2 in Luke and this one) focus on Jesus' relationships with others

- ❖ Executioners, Convicts, Family

The focus of this reading in particular is on Jesus in his relationship with others

John contrasts two groups of on-lookers, soldiers and women:

- ❖ Soldiers, who beat him up and killed him and divided up his clothes.
 - We have to think about Andries Tatane, who was murdered by SAPS in Ficksburg and will be buried tomorrow. A moment's silence for him and his family.
- ❖ Women, who followed and believed in him, who were faithful at the end (unlike most of the men), who grieved and cared, who came back later to help prepare him for burial.
 - Includes Jesus' mother, his aunt and two other Mary's including Mary Magdalene, who encounters Jesus in the Garden on Sunday morning.
- ❖ John contrasts these two with the linking words 'So this is what the soldiers did' and 'But standing near the cross of Jesus were...'
 - Dividing the world into those who crucify and those who watch over.
 - But we can recognise ourselves in both these groups.

Meditation

Let us locate ourselves in Mary's place. Perhaps you have seen one of Pieta sculptures or paintings, of Mary holding the broken body of Jesus. She is Jesus' mother. This is her son. She is also his disciple. She witnesses the brutal murder of her beloved and stands by helpless to change it. Trina and I lost our first child to a miscarriage – it was such a painful experience. What must this have been like for Mary? What will you be thinking, feeling, praying if you were standing in Mary's place?

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Jesus says to his mother, "Dear woman, behold your son" and to the disciple, "Behold your mother."

This form of speech "Behold", which comes from the Greek word 'to see' is used four times in this chapter.

- ❖ Jesus uses it twice to link Mary and John.
- ❖ Pilate uses it twice to refer to Jesus: Behold the man (v5) and Behold your king (v14).

The Gospel writer wants us to recognise a key point that underlies this passage, that we are all related to Christ and to each other. Jesus on the cross and Mary and John below are a triadic relationship.

The Gospel calls us to reflect deeply on who we are in relation to Christ and who Christ is in relation to us.

Meditation

Let us reflect on who Christ is to us. Think for yourself about who Jesus is to you. Is he 'the man' or 'your king'? Your friend, your lover, your feared-one, your master? Who is Jesus to you?

And who are you to Jesus? Are you his faithful friend? His beloved child? His lost sheep? His betrayer? Who are you?

Jesus hangs on the cross and looks down. He sees his mother and the disciple whom he loved, his cousin John.

He could have:

- ❖ Turned inward towards his own suffering and pain
- ❖ Turned upward to the cosmic battle raging around him
- ❖ Turned to anger and bitterness, resentment and hatred
- ❖ Turned towards heaven, hoping for release and return to the Father.

Instead, he turns towards his family – his mother, his much-loved disciple.

He expresses deep compassion, intimacy, close relationship.

Even in the midst of everything, Jesus is concerned for human relationships, for family.

Meditation

Let us reflect on those whom we love, and particularly on those in our family that we feel most estranged from, most concerned about. Put yourself in Jesus' place on the cross, looking down at you and that family member. Jesus says to you, "Dear one, behold your family member" and to your family member, "Behold your loved one". Reflect on this relationship and what Jesus is saying to you, from the cross, today.

Closing Prayer

Lord, our God, this is the place where we may worship you;

You have set your name here.

Here in your presence our families shall rejoice, because you have blessed us;

Here we present to you the offering of our lives;

Here we promise to obey your laws;

Here we pray for our children, that we and they may do what is right in your sight;

Through Jesus our Redeemer, Amen

We pray for those who will be unhappy today:

For mothers who cannot provide for their children – Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For fathers who cannot earn enough money for their families –

For children who are ill or frightened –

For all who are alone and without people to love them –

Bless those who give their lives in service to the poor and hungry,

And strengthen us to help in meeting their needs;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

Lord Jesus Christ, our friend and our King

You looked down from the cross and saw your mother

And the disciple whom you loved.

You established between them new bonds of family, of kinship, of care.

Dear Woman, behold your son. Behold your mother.

Help us to look with your eyes upon all members of our families

To see deep and unspoken needs, to recognise frailty and longing,

to build anew damaged relationships.

Help us to build the relationships on you, our brother, our beloved.

We ask in the name of Jesus, the Messiah.

Amen