

Good Friday Reflection

Lord Jesus, give us wisdom as we advocate for others, for in defending the downtrodden, we hear your voice speak up for us.

Today we mark Good Friday, the most sombre of days in the Church's calendar. We do not have Mass, rather it is typical to have several services commemorating Jesus's trial and scourging, His journey to Calvary and death on the cross. It is common to pray the Stations of the Cross, many do walks of witness and we normally gather at just before 3pm to celebrate the Church's main service of the day.

The readings today remind us of the great depths of suffering that Jesus endured to save us all. Indeed the various actions we do throughout the day help us to realise how traumatic an experience the Passion was. We are moved by the extent of God's love for us and by the fact that through His incarnate son, He has shared in the suffering which causes much of the darkness in our lives.

One of the most striking parts of the Good Friday service is the Solemn Intercessions. While these prayers are similar to our usual bidding prayers, they are far more in depth and comprehensive – this year an extra, eleventh prayer has been added in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The prayers are offered for all people and speak to the importance of Christians offering prayers up for all situations, especially those where there is great need.

We see many such situations in our world today, particularly when we see the sort of suffering in its various forms which echo some of what Jesus experienced. Suffering is something our refugee friends at JRS are all too familiar with; both in the situations which forced them to flee their homes and in the daily struggles they face whilst seeking sanctuary here in the UK. The words of the psalmist today speak to the sort of isolation and marginalization many of our friends talk about: *"Those who see me in the street run far away from me. I am like a dead man, forgotten in men's hearts, like a thing thrown away"*.

The JRS charter talks of part of our mission to our refugee friends being to 'advocate their cause in an uncaring world'. In our advocacy work we seek to give a voice to our friends, allowing their experiences and concerns to be expressed, ensuring those who make and implement policy are aware of the effects their decisions have on those people who have come to the UK looking for safety.

This past year, we have begun a group called *Refugees Call for Change* which brings many of our friends together to share their experiences of navigating the asylum system, highlight the issues they think ought to be changed and to work together to articulate a way forward and advocate for one another. We are very excited by the group's activities so far and are sure it will yield much fruit for our friends. (You can read about this on our blogs).

When we join our prayer with this sort of thoughtful and powerful advocacy, we can sense a hope rising in us, that change is possible and that the suffering that many face as they journey through the asylum system may one day be a thing of the past.

As you remain with the cross today, we invite you to ask what you can do to speak out for others who are suffering? What is the Lord calling you to do?