

## Good Friday: John the Apostle, at the Cross

### Readings

Mark 9: 2 – 4, 7 – 10. The Transfiguration

Mark 10: 35 – 40. The request of James and John

John 19: 26 – 27. Jesus places his mother, Mary, in the care of John; and John as her son.

### Address

It is difficult even to think that it was a mere three years ago...

There was Dad, James and me and the hired servants<sup>1</sup> at work in our fishing boat. Dad giving instructions; the servants were getting the boat seaworthy; James and I were mending nets; and then Jesus, followed by Simon and Andrew<sup>2</sup>, our friends and fishing partners<sup>3</sup>, walked by...

I didn't know at the time just what it was, but we were all kind of ...mesmerised... Jesus said hardly anything. No 'Hi Uncle Zebedee' for him; something witty,...like: "Uncle; Have a thundering great catch! Give my love to Aunt Salome<sup>4</sup>." That was Jesus. Then he calls out, "James! John! Follow me!"<sup>5</sup> I glance over at James. He had this kind of astonished look on his face. Mouth sort of half open, as if he was going to say something, but he just nodded! We jumped out of the boat, waded ashore and off we went, catching up to Jesus. Left Dad looking even more amazed. We didn't even put away the net or the mending kit, or wash the fish scales from our hands; well, not until later, anyway.

Mmm, but really, Dad shouldn't have been amazed! I'd told him about what happened the day John was baptising and Jesus presented himself. I was on 'crowd control'; getting the multitude into line; there tax collectors<sup>6</sup>, soldiers<sup>7</sup>, all jostling for a place. Next thing, I look up! It was Jesus' turn; I hear John protesting; he goes ahead and baptises Jesus and then there is 'The Voice'... "This is my Son!"<sup>8</sup> It was so sudden!

At the time, I didn't really understand what was happening. John told us later. I should have followed my instincts and followed Jesus, then-and-there! Doubters we were. Most of us still followed John. He was such an inspiration! Brave! Direct in what he had to say; 'You brood of vipers' he once called the Pharisees and Sadducees who came for baptism<sup>9</sup>; the way he ticked off Herod landed him in gaol.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mk 1:20

<sup>2</sup> Mk 1: 16 - 18

<sup>3</sup> Lk 5: 7

<sup>4</sup> Mk 15: 40; Lk 8: 3

<sup>5</sup> Mk 1: 19 - 20; Matt 4: 21; Lk 5: 10

<sup>6</sup> Mk 3: 12

<sup>7</sup> Mk 3: 14

<sup>8</sup> Mk 1: 9 – 11; Matt 3: 13 – 17. Lk 3: 21 -23a

<sup>9</sup> Matt 2: 7

But, we still kept on asking ourselves about Jesus' baptism, arguing and not listening to John. When John was in prison we received a message. I think he wanted to settle it once and for all; he sent Andrew and me to ask Jesus: "Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?"<sup>10</sup> Just like that! In the kindest way, Jesus told us: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, many with evil spirits have been cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor. What else do you expect? It all added up. We told John; I can't bear even to think how such a good man's life, a prophet's life, ended. John was overjoyed. His work was not in vain. The words of the prophets of old were being fulfilled before our very eyes.

That was when I really knew. Jesus you are the one! But, I never thought that you would call me.

What hasn't happened in three years! Here you are, treated as a common criminal. Never done a bad thing! Such high hopes! What a wonderful, close, friendship! Jesus, you accepted me, sons of Thunder you called James and me; you read us like a scroll. Despite myself, some have even called me "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

Only yesterday, you trusted Peter and me to see to the arrangements for the Passover supper.<sup>11</sup> I was right at your side last night; and you confided in me about who would betray you and yet, I did not grasp the gravity, the awful truth, that it would be so soon and one of us!

If I had only known that it would be the last. You loved me just as I was, and still am, maybe with a few corners knocked off: impetuous, high spirited, undisciplined, embarrassingly ambitious...

I cringe to think how James and I on our journey to Jerusalem asked you if you wanted us "to command fire to come down from heaven [to] consume [the Samaritan village that rejected your messengers preparing us]"<sup>12</sup>. But worse still, when we asked you, Jesus, if we could sit at Your left hand and Your right hand in Your Glory?<sup>13</sup> Look at these poor fellows at *his* left and right, now! That would have been James and me! You saved us from our own foolishness!

Oh Jesus! How I have let you down? You took me into your confidence so many times. When you raised Jairus' daughter, you invited me in with Peter and James; we saw the whole thing before our very eyes<sup>14</sup>. I was there! And...the time the three of us walked with you up the mountain; what a day that was! We could hardly believe our eyes. Your clothes glowing as bright as the desert sun, and you talking with Elijah...and... Moses!<sup>15</sup> I was there with you! The voice again: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to Him." And then, the hardest of all, you ordered that we mustn't breathe a word to anyone "until the Son of Man had risen from the dead."

---

<sup>10</sup> Lk 7: 18 -23

<sup>11</sup> Lk 22: 8

<sup>12</sup> Lk 9: 51 - 56

<sup>13</sup> Mk 10: 35 - 40

<sup>14</sup> Mk 5: 21 - 43. Lk 8: 41 - 56. Matt 9: 18 -26

<sup>15</sup> Mk 9: 2 - 4, 7 - 9

We kept saying, 'What did he mean? I still wonder what 'rising from the dead' means.<sup>16</sup>

Oh! How could I have slept in Gethsemane when you were in anguish? I *was* exhausted! But, Jesus, my greatest companion and friend, the saviour of our people, the Son of God, you needed me to support you in your prayer. But, no; there I was unable to keep awake. And you pleaded with us.<sup>17</sup> Please forgive me; I am sorry...

Is that Jesus speaking? Yes! ... He said I must take care of his mother! And, I am to be her son! Oh! What this means to me! You still trust me! In your hour of agony, what a privilege to be the son to your mother, Mary.<sup>18</sup> My heavy heart is lifted! Thank you!

[Word count: 1 001]

## PRAYER

Lord, as we stand at the cross with your disciple John  
and hear your words,  
Still caring even in your agony,  
We ask you to work in us your desire;  
That as your friends and members of the family of God  
We may care deeply for each other,  
And unselfishly commend your love in word and deed.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Mk 9: 10

<sup>17</sup> Mk 14: 32 - 42

<sup>18</sup> Jn 19: 26 - 27

<sup>19</sup> Adapted prayer by Roger Pickering to focus on John rather than on Mary.