

A GOOD FRIDAY REFLECTION **ON THE CRUCIFIXION**

This reflection is based upon the
Anglo-Saxon poem,
“ The Dream of Rood”

It is narrated by the “Penitent Dreamer” and the
Tree, (the Rood) and is interspersed with
reflections and music.

(click on the blue links to access the music via
internet)

OPENING PRAYER FOR GOOD FRIDAY

Lord we have journeyed.

We have journeyed with You into the streets of Jerusalem.
We have walked with the crowd, raising shouts of acclamation!

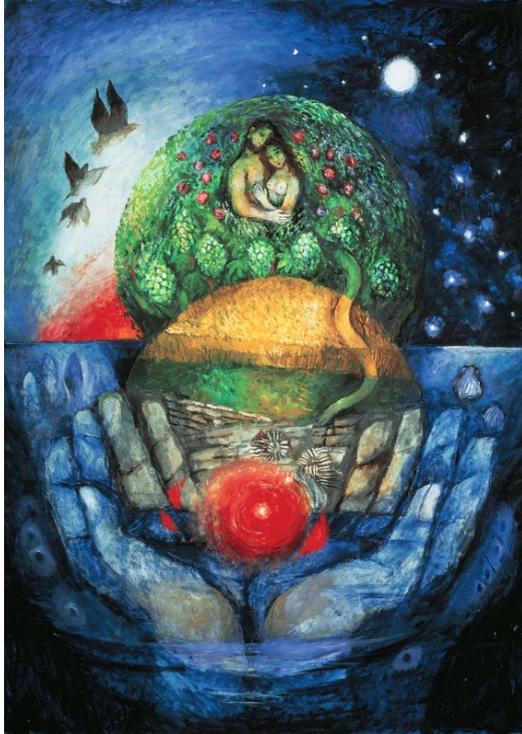
We have journeyed to the table with You, as Your invited guests,
and feasted in Your company.

Some of us fell asleep as You prayed in the darkness alone;
Forgive us Lord.

Enable us to journey with you along the path of suffering
May we not flinch or turn our face from you.

Help us in our weakness to remain faithfully by your side,
today, tomorrow and forever.

AMEN.



THE PENITENT DREAMER

Listen and I will tell you the very best of dreams which came to me in the middle of the night while humanity slept. I saw an extraordinary tree, brightest of all beams, towering into the air, and wound about by light.

That beacon was encased in gold and priceless gems; some at its base, fair on the surface of the earth, and more gleamed at the cross beam. Hosts of angels kept watch over it. This was no gallows for a common criminal; and all of creation beheld it.

Strange and rare was that triumphant tree, while I, stained by sin and torn by my faults. I saw the tree of glory in honorable attire, beautiful,

shining, arrayed with gold. Yet through the gold, I could see an earlier most wretched ordeal, for it began to shed blood.

I was drenched with sorrow and frightened by the beautiful vision, for it changed. Sometimes it was soaked with wetness, stained with the coursing of blood., sometimes it was adorned with treasure. Yet, as I lay there, sadly I beheld the Saviour's tree, until I heard it call out the best wood of all forests.

REFLECTION

As the soul of humanity, sleeps in the womb of self-righteousness and sin, it fails to recognize itself as the most precious of all dreams conceived. A dream brought to birth in Eden, where the waters of life flowed, and where humanity walked together in the cool of the day, in intimacy and fellowship with the Creator.

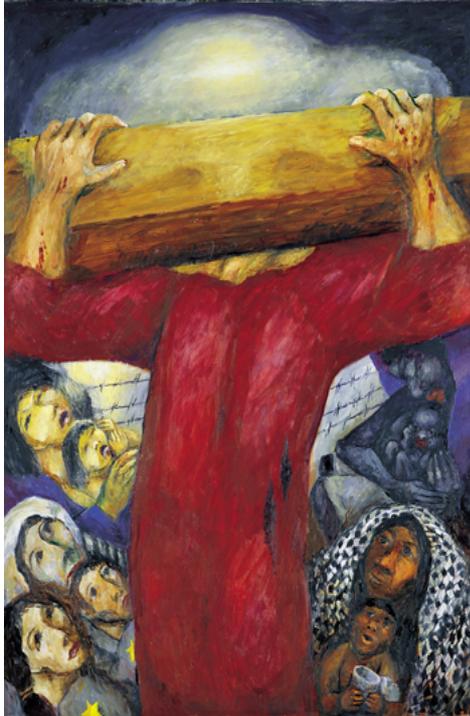
But there was an abrupt and startling awakening; as the fruit was severed from the tree and shared, they awaken into the nightmare of self-reliance, as they divested themselves of the Lord and danced to the music of temptation with the serpent. But such was the persistence

of the Creator, that a new dream was woven; a dream which comes into the consciousness of the penitent, who gazes upon the triumphant tree, that is arrayed in splendour and yet is wounded and bleeds. There, he is held, and contemplated the stains and tears of sin that brand him, not realising that in his penitence, he is set free, free to hear the tale of the tree.

I will sweep away your sin like a cloud. I will scatter your offences, like the morning mist. Return to me for I have paid the price. "Isaiah 44 v 22

Music from The Passion of the Christ- The Olive Garden – click on link

<https://youtu.be/TM5hTUTbMBU>



THE TREE SPEAKS OF OUR WARRIOR LORD

“It was long ago; well I remember when I was ripped up by roots and taken from trunk. Strong enemies took me there and made a spectacle of me, ordering me to lift up their criminals.

Men bore me on their shoulders, until they set me on a hill; enemies fastened me firmly there. Then I saw the saviour of mankind, hasten with great zeal as if he wished to climb upon me. I dared not break nor bow against the Lord’s command when I saw the corners of the earth tremble. I could have felled all the enemies, but I stood fast.

The young Hero, who was God Almighty, stripped off His attire; strong and resolute, he mounted the high gallows, brave in the sight of many, for he wished to free mankind. I trembled when the Warrior embraced

me; however, I did not dare to bow to the earth or fall down to the surface of the ground. I was reared a cross; I raised up the powerful King, the Lord of heaven, and I did not dare bow down.

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REFLECTION

The strange thing about venomous serpents is that they hold the power to destroy and paradoxically to heal. If you were unfortunate enough to be bitten, then the antidote to be administered, is manufactured, milked from their jaws. The serpent with all its toxicity, seduces humanity to dance with it, and lures humanity to lead lives that are degraded and fall short of the Lord's Dream.

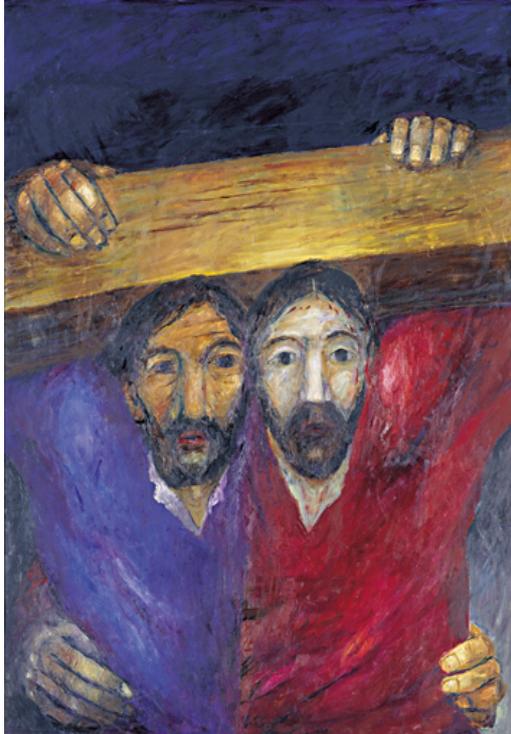
In the wilderness and facing a plague of deadly serpents, the people of Israel cried out for mercy. God instructs Moses, not to make a remedy, for no manufactured remedy could take away their sin and heal them, but to make a bronze serpent, to put upon a pole, to be held

up in the midst of the people. Only those who looked up at the serpent were healed and saved. So too is Christ the Warrior, lifted up in triumph, like the bronze serpent, and those who turn their faces towards Christ, receive the antidote for the venom of separation, self-righteousness and sin, to dance once again in the Creator's restorative dream. By looking towards Christ can we receive salvation, spiritual healing and rebirth.

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the World through Him." John 3 v 17

Music from the Mass of the Armed Man- Charge!

<https://youtu.be/9IzYGJpaBhU>



THE LAMENTATION OF THE TREE; PARTNERS IN SUFFERING

They pierced me with dark nails; on me the wounds of malic, visible. They mocked us both together. I was drenched with blood, flowing from the Man's side, when he yielded up His spirit. Many cruel blows of fate I endured upon that hill! I saw the God of hosts, grievously stretched out. Darkness had covered the Ruler's corpse with the clouds; over that bright radiance there came forth a shadow, dark beneath the clouds. All creation wept, lamenting the King's fall.

Christ was on the Rood.

But men came from afar, hastening to the prince. I was sorely troubled with grief, but I bowed down

to the Warrior's hands. Humbly and full of zeal, they took Almighty God, lifting Him from the torment. The warriors left me there, covered with blood; I was terribly torn with iron points. They laid the weary limbed one down and stood by His head. There they watched the Lord of heaven, as He rested there for a while, exhausted by the great battle.

They began to make a sepulchre for Him. Warriors still within view, carving it out of bright stone, and in that they set the Ruler of triumphs. When they were ready to depart, they raised a song of sorrow for Him. Wretched in the evening time, He rested there, with little company.

REFLECTION

In 1940, a shadow fell across us" wrote Corrie ten Boom. "Nobody dreamt that the tiny cloud would grow until it blocked the sky." The ten Booms were a Christian family living in Harlem, Holland, and following the Nazi occupation the family felt called to respond to the suffering of the Jews and the resistance, and hid numerous people in their home, despite the great risk. This continued until 1944 when a Dutch informant, betrayed the ten Boom family and they were arrested. Corrie and her sister were sent to Ravensbruk concentration camp where

her sister died. Corrie was only released after immense suffering, because of a clerical error, the rest of the women being sent to the gas chambers.

The tree and Christ in the poem are depicted as mutual partners in suffering, and the ten Boom family were similarly called to share in the suffering of others, and it was the heinous torment that stole from Corrie her nearest and dearest. Like the lamentation of Christ wailed from the cross, Corrie lifted up to God what she alone could not bear. The informant returned to ask her forgiveness, and she wailed in her heart a lamentation to God, but that lamentation was a sign of hope, for she was gifted a strength from God that enabled her to have a remarkable, transformative and global reconciliation ministry.

As the body of Christ is received from the rood, and laid to rest after the exhausting battle, a song of lamentation is sung by the men who have come from afar to bury him, unaware that their song of pain and sorrow is in fact one of hope. Hope that God is still there; hope that God will have the final word; hope that there will be a better tomorrow.

As cries of lamentation are echoed throughout the world today, by those who are lynched, and crucified on contemporary crosses, we are called to become partners in their suffering,

that they might know that they have not been given up on, and that there is hope for a better tomorrow.

Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God. The Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. Isaiah 43 vs 1-3

PRAYER

Saviour of the world, what did you do to deserve this,
and what have we done to deserve you?

Strung up by criminals, cursed and spat upon you waited for death
and looked for us, for us whose sin crucified you.

To the mystery of underserved suffering you bring the deeper mystery of unmerited love.

Forgive us for not knowing what we are doing now,
as through wood and nails you disempower our depravity and transform us by your grace.

AMEN

Music – The Mass of the Armed Man- Agnus Dei



<https://youtu.be/55oURTjPgEE>

THE TREE SPEAKS OF THE POWER OF THE CROSS

We still stood there, weeping in that place for a long time. The voices of the warriors faded away. The body grew cold, then someone came to fell us all to the ground: that was a frightful fate! Someone buried us deep in a pit. But the Lord's friends and servants found me and arrayed me with silver and gold. Now the time has come when I am honoured far and wide by men all over the earth and all this glorious creation prays to this beacon.

On me God's Son suffered, therefore I now rise up glorious under heaven, and I can save every one of those who hold me in awe.

Now I urge you my beloved man, that you tell men about this dream: Reveal with words that it is the tree of glory upon

which almighty God suffered for mankind's sins and Adam's ancient deeds, for I am the healer's tree.

The warrior tasted death there: nonetheless, after that, the Lord arose in His great might to be of help to men. He ascended into heaven, but he shall return to earth again on Doomsday; the Lord himself to seek out mankind. Almighty God shall come with His angels, and he who is Judge over all, shall give judgment to each of them according to what he has earned here in this transitory life.

None can then be unafraid of the words the Ruler speaks, for he shall ask the many where that man, who for the Lord's name, would taste bitter death, as he did before on the beam that is the Cross. And they shall be afraid then and think of little which they can say to Christ. Yet neither need any man who bears in his heart the best of all beacons, be afraid, for through the rood shall every soul seek the kingdom from his earthly path, if he wants to remain with the Ruler.

REFLECTION

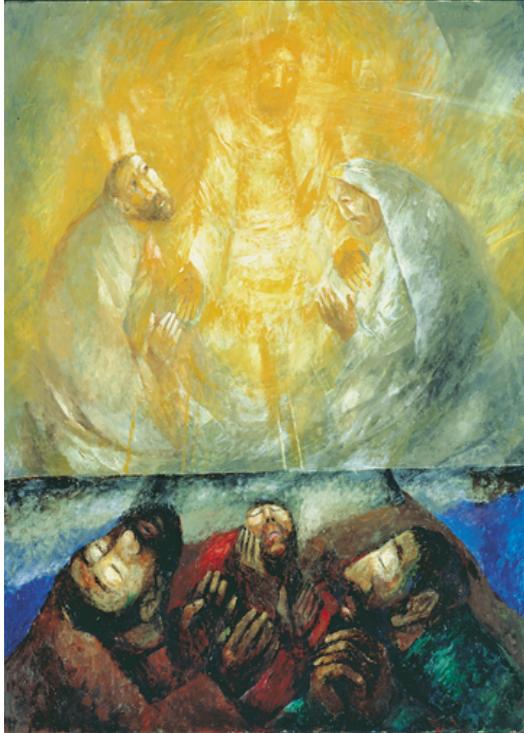
The healer's tree becomes a manifestation of God's grace. Healing, wholeness and salvation are bound together, and those who turn their face to the Cross of Christ, the cross of redemption, live with a greater peace in their hearts. Christ suffers not to put us to shame but to set us free, to draw us to God's love. The cross is like a prop that helps us to stay on our feet and strengthens us. It gives us confidence, not in ourselves but in Christ, so that we can go on to finish the journey of life and claim the promised fruit of the Tree of life, and to take it's healing leaves out into the world.

The leaves of the healer's tree were shared in 1999, when Jo Berry went to meet with the man who killed her father. She thought that Patrick Magee a former member of the provisional IRA would not meet with her after their first meeting, but he changed, and later on Magee said, "I was disarmed by the empathy she showed me, and I could no longer remain in the position of self-righteousness."

Jo and Patrick now work together travelling the world, speaking on conflict resolution. The Cross, if we meditate on it prayerfully, has the power to disarm us, and to lead us away from our self-righteousness and sin, and remove us to a place of transformation.

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. Revelation 21 v 4

Music- Margaret Rizza- Rising Prayer https://youtu.be/ZJT_DYXvH7s



THE PENITENT IS TRANSFORMED.

Then, in joyful mood and full of zeal, I made my prayer to that beam, alone as I was with little company. Urged by my heart to go quickly, I endured a time of great longing. Now it is my life's joy to seek alone for that triumphant beam, to honour it more often than other men do: my desire for it is much in my mind.

Every day I expect the rood of the Lord, which I saw before here on this earth, to fetch me away from this transitory life and bring me where true bliss is, and to joy in heaven, where the Lord's people sit at the feast and bliss is everlasting; the right way of life, the way to heaven, which the Cross explained that it opened up and set me there, where for ever after , I may remain in glory and fully share in the joys of the saints.

May the Lord be a friend to me, he who once on earth suffered on the gallows-tree for the sins of man. He then freed us, and gave us life, a heavenly home. Hope was renewed, with dignity and with joy for those who suffered the fires of hell. The Son was triumphant, mighty in battle, when he returned with many a great host of spirits, into God's kingdom, and to the joy of angels and of all the saints who had remained before in glory in heaven; the Lord, the almighty God, came into His own realm.

HYMN

Oh, to see the dawn
Of the darkest day:
Christ on the road to Calvary.
Tried by sinful men,
Torn and beaten, then
Nailed to a cross of wood.

*This, the power of the cross:
Christ became sin for us,
Took the blame, bore the wrath:
We stand forgiven at the cross.*

**Oh, to see the pain
Written on Your face
Bearing the awesome weight of sin;
Every bitter thought,
Every evil deed
Crowning Your bloodstained brow.**

Refrain

**Now the daylight flees,
Now the ground beneath
Quakes as its Maker bows His head.
Curtain torn in two,
Dead are raised to life;
'Finished!' the victory cry!**

Refrain

Oh, to see my name
Written in the wounds,
For through Your suffering I am free.
Death is crushed to death,
Life is mine to live,
Won through Your selfless love.

Refrain

Music The Power of the Cross – Keith & Kristyn Getty, Stuart Townend

<https://youtu.be/uS7fc7VTJZs>

*We proclaim Christ nailed to the cross;
Though this is an offence to some and foolishness to others,
to those who are called, no matter their status,
Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

***In life,
In death,
In life beyond death,
Jesus Christ is Lord!***

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A BRIEF BACKGROUND

The Dream of the Rood is one of the oldest pieces of English literature, combining the commonly understood Germanic heroic tradition, where Christ is seen as an Anglo-Saxon warrior lord, eagerly leaping onto the cross, with the conflicting and probably very alien Christian doctrine of forgiveness and self-sacrifice. In its time, the powerful imagery would have spoken to the pre-Christian population. The animistic tree, that speaks and is sacrificed, is in line with pagan virtues and the understanding of the time. In many ways, it is a piece presented in a colloquial style, to be understood by both pre-Christians (pagans) and Christians alike and challenges us today, as we reflect upon the crucifixion of Christ and as we contemplate the theology of salvation.

It has been attributed to the Northumbrian poet, Cædmon, and also to Cynewulf, who wrote about the discovery of the “true cross” by Helena, (Constantine’s mother), but its origins, as are its date, are far from conclusive. Some of the runes were carved into the Ruthwell Cross, which itself, dates from around the 8th Century and it appears in full, in the 10th Century document, the Vercelli Manuscript.