

**The Good Friday of the Lord – Year A – 4/3/2026 – Msgr. Peter Quang Nguyen**

**First Reading: Isaiah 52:13-53:12:** A prophetic passage in the Hebrew Bible that describes the suffering of a righteous servant who is despised and rejected by others but ultimately bears their sins and brings healing through his sacrifice. The passage is often interpreted as a foreshadowing of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and is considered a central text in Christian theology.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 31:** These verses include the words spoken by Jesus on the cross as he surrendered his spirit to God. Despite scorn and isolation, my faith in the Lord as my refuge remains unshaken. Entrusting my future to His mercy, I seek His light and salvation, encouraging all to remain steadfast in their hope in the Lord.

**Second Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9:** Jesus is the ultimate high priest who sympathizes with human weakness and has made a perfect sacrifice for sin, thus providing a way for humanity to approach God with confidence. The passage urges readers to hold fast to their faith in Jesus, who has been appointed by God as the source of eternal salvation.

**Gospel: John 18:1-19:42:** Jesus, after being betrayed by Judas, was arrested and faced trials before Jewish and Roman leaders, culminating in his crucifixion. Despite Pilate's hesitation, pressured by Jewish authorities and a manipulated crowd, he consented to Jesus' death. Jesus was crucified at Golgotha alongside two others. Before his death, he ensured care for his mother and declared his mission fulfilled. His side was pierced, verifying his death. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus buried Jesus in a new tomb, marking the preparation day's urgency.

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Unlike the narrative style of the Synoptic Gospels, the Johannine literature offers a mystical perspective on Jesus' active agency as a King entering into His Passion—albeit a King wearing a "crown" of thorns:

Jesus declares, "**I am He,**" to those who come to arrest Him; He forthrightly affirms His doctrine and public preaching before the High Priest Caiaphas; He asserts His status as "King" and proclaims His kingship before Governor Pilate; and later, Pilate himself confirms—at least twice—"Behold the Man," when presenting Him to the crowd; finally, Pilate inscribes the plaque hung above Jesus' cross, affirming: "**Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.**"

On Good Friday, let us look up at the Cross and contemplate a crucified King—a King who is Love itself, who died for humanity and to set humanity free.

The image of Jesus the King is unlike that of any other monarch on earth. He is a King without a throne, without a palace, without an army, without subjects, and without a kingdom in the worldly sense. He is a King who is poor, suffering, humiliated, reviled, and crucified upon the Cross.

But why call Him King? Jesus' own answer to Pilate—"My Kingdom is not of this world"—provides us with the answer.

First and foremost, by professing Jesus as King, we naturally acknowledge the existence of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the presence of a King reigning within our own souls.

The essential point is this:

- Jesus the King died between two condemned criminals; this signifies that He died in place of sinners—that is, in place of us.
- This King prayed for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him; this signifies that He acts as our Advocate, interceding with God the Father to grant forgiveness to all of humanity. A Merciful and Loving King.
- This King sought to save His people, not Himself—a stark contrast to the taunts of the leaders and soldiers. It signifies that the King dared to die (for) His people, rather than expecting His people to die (for) Him.

The Jewish leaders, the soldiers, and even the thief on His left challenged Him: **“If You are the King, save Yourself!”** They knew that Jesus had healed many, yet they demanded that He save Himself as well; they viewed this specific act as the ultimate test of His worth. For they judged all matters according to worldly logic—not through the lens of charity and salvation, but through the standards of selfishness and self-aggrandizement.

Consequently, they expected the King of God’s people to be just like them: selfish, prioritizing His own well-being above all else thinking of Himself first, and others second. Were that the case, where would the true meaning of service lie? Where, then, would be the "Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep"?

Therefore, as Christians—when we kneel to kiss the foot of the Cross and acclaim Jesus as King—we must seek God’s glory, not our own; we must make sacrifices for the sake of others, rather than striving for personal honor. Whenever we focus solely on our own needs while remaining indifferent to the plight of others, we are, in essence, choosing to enthrone materialism as king within our souls, displacing King Jesus.

Jesus is a King who does not reign through brute force but serves through love. Until the very end of time, He continues to draw us toward Himself. The Cross is the very place where His kingship is revealed in its purest form, beyond any possibility of misunderstanding.

We must gaze upon Him on the Cross to learn the true way to conquer the world—for today’s world is moved most deeply by acts of love and forgiveness. May Jesus, the King of Love, reign supreme within our compassionate hearts as we reach out to our fellow human beings.

*Lord Jesus, grant that we may always look up to Your Cross—the sign of sacrificial love—so that we, too, may offer ourselves in service to others within our own station; thus, may You Yourself sanctify our hearts and lives, making us worthy citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, where You, the King of Love, await to welcome us. Amen.*