

Holy Week Reflections 2024

By Canon Michael Hutson,
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Safi,
Rwanda

Based on the Liturgy of the Word
for the given days

 **SCIAF**
Uniting for a just world
Caritas Scotland

**WEE
—
BOX**

Big change

Faith in action

Monday of Holy Week

Generosity

At SCIAF, Scripture inspires us, and prayer and reflection are integral to our work. The following daily reflections are from the liturgical readings for Holy Week 2024. Our hope is that you benefit from using them each day in a moment of quiet reflection.

SCIAF is the official relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in Scotland. We are compelled by Christ's love to help people in the world's poorest places to lift themselves out of poverty and learn the skills they need to thrive long into the future.

This year marks 30 years since the genocide in Rwanda, when up to one million of our sisters and brothers sadly lost their lives. SCIAF's WEE BOX, BIG CHANGE appeal this Lent focusses on the legacy of these horrifying events in Rwanda and the lasting issue of violence against women.

If you would like to receive more prayer resources like this one, please sign up to receive our monthly prayer resource straight to your inbox sciaf.org.uk/pray

We are grateful to Canon Michael Hutson for his Holy Week Reflections, which take us from Monday 25th to Saturday 30th March 2024.

**Daily readings: Isaiah 42:1-11
Psalm 27:1-3, 13-14
John 12:1-11**

With the help of Google, you can estimate the price of Mary's pure nard at as much as £40,000. This extreme generosity is joined to Mary's intimate use of the perfume in respect of the Lord, in terms of a selfless sacrifice of love. Jesus himself makes the connection between this anointing and the anointing that his dead body will need later in the week. His sacrifice will be the ultimate act of generosity, the supreme act of love.

We hear four of the Suffering Servant poems from Isaiah in our Liturgy of the Word this week. Today's excerpt suggests that the sacrifice of suffering leads to true justice, the cause of right, freeing captives.

Inspired by the Word of God today, we give thanks for the generosity of all those who support SCIAF; the sacrifices we make to promote justice and peace. We pray that we can find ever more effective ways to serve our sisters and brothers in the world's poorest places.

Open my eyes to the needs of my sisters and brothers; inspire in me words and actions to comfort those who labour and are burdened. Make me respond to their needs after the example of Christ, and at his command. And may Your Church stand as a living witness to truth and freedom, to peace and justice, that all people may be raised up to a new hope. Amen.

Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund

SCIAF is the official relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in Scotland and a proud member of the Caritas family. 7 West Nile Street, Glasgow G1 2PR. Tel: 0141 354 5555. Scottish Charity No: SC012302. Company No: SC197327. Photo by Colin Hattersley.



Tuesday of Holy Week

Betrayal and forgiveness

**Daily readings: Isaiah 49:1-6
Psalm 71:1-6, 15 and 17
John 13:21-33, 36-38**

John Chapter 11 shows that Jesus was distressed and wept at the death of his friend Lazarus. In today's Gospel he is deeply troubled again: Judas is going to betray him, and Peter will deny even knowing him. Being upset by loved ones who have disappointed us in some way is a reality for all of us. It's probably why we find the idea of loving our enemies so challenging. It's why reconciliation in families, and among nations, can be so difficult. Later this week, Jesus will express forsakenness, though in almost the same breath he shows his love when he asks the Father to **"forgive them; for they know not what they do."** Luke 23:34

It might be helpful when we feel the pit-in-the-stomach desolation of betrayal, to remember that the Scriptures tell us our Lord suffered in the same way. Perhaps he reflected on today's Responsorial Psalm and first Reading: ever since we were in our mother's womb, God has always been there for us; providing strength, help, rescue.

Today's a good day to reflect on the challenging proposition: it's not loving Jesus that makes me a good Christian, it's loving Judas.

**God of Mercy,
show me how to reassure the desolate,
help me to forgive those I need to forgive,
to comfort those I need to comfort,
to honour those I need to honour, to love those
I need to love.
Amen.**

Wednesday of Holy Week

Passover liberation

**Daily readings: Isaiah 50:4-9
Psalm 69:8-10, 21-22, 31 and 33-34
Matthew 26:14-25**

By locating the Last Supper in the context of the Passover, Jesus imbues the meal with many layers of meaning: the blood of the lamb marked over the door so that the angel of death would pass over; the exodus story of escape from Egypt to the Promised Land; liberation from the injustice, poverty and abuse that slavery involves. Passover is the journey away from death and despair towards life in its fullness.

In the Upper Room, Jesus gives the Passover its definitive meaning. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that his 'passing over to the Father by his death and Resurrection, is anticipated in the supper and celebrated in the Eucharist... awaiting in hope... the final Passover of the church in the glory of the kingdom.'

Our first Reading and Psalm really are a 'game of two halves' today! Spending time reading them over and over, we can place ourselves in the position of Isaiah's Suffering Servant, perhaps allowing the words to give expression to our own experiences of desolation and despondency. But then we reach the turning point. Verse 33 and 34 of the Psalm is when we are freed from the darkness with a song of thanksgiving and glory to God. This moment of praise is our Passover in today's Liturgy of the Word. We pass over from taunts and broken heartedness to joy for the poor and needy.

Passover is liberation.

**Today, as I pass over from Lent to Easter
I make a prayer for liberation: for people who are sick
in body or mind; for people who are struggling for
justice and peace and joy, for victims of modern-day
slavery for those who suffer in ways that others do
not even imagine. May I make use of the resources of
SCIAF for the sake of people in the poorest places in
the world.
Amen**

Holy Thursday

May the 'washer of feet' inspire us!

**Daily readings: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14
Psalm 116:12-13, 15-18
John 13:1-15**

Holy Thursday has lots going on. In the morning, many of us will join in the Mass of Chrism, when the Oils of Catechumens and the Sick are blessed, and the Oil of Chrism is consecrated. (For logistical reasons, some of our dioceses celebrate the event before Holy Thursday). This Mass also includes the rite when Priests renew their promises to their Bishop. The people also express their prayerful support for their Priests and for their Bishop.

In the evening, we have the Mass of the Lord's Supper. The Institution of the Eucharist from St Paul and the foot-washing from John's gospel unite to present a model of how we are to be disciples of Christ. The homily is on the institution of the Eucharist, the Institution of the Priesthood and on the imperative to love one another.

Finally, we go to the Altar of Repose. After a busy day of church, there is silence, stillness, and time to reflect on the rich liturgies we have celebrated.

Lord Jesus, Washer of Feet, may your example of unconditional love be an inspiration for me to serve my sisters and brothers who are needy in any way. May my active participation in the celebration of Mass strengthen me to actively love my neighbour. May the whole People of God in Scotland work together to support our Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund to serve people living in the world's poorest places. Amen.

Good Friday

Kissing the Cross

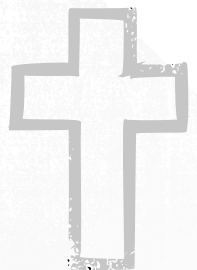
**Daily readings: Isaiah 52:13-53:12
Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-17, 24
Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9
John 18:1-19:42**

You can steal a kiss or give a kiss.
You can blow a kiss.
Farewell kiss: Ae Fond Kiss and Then We Sever!
When words fail, a kiss can say it all.
You may now kiss the bride!
Healing, when your mum kisses it better.
Reconciling when you kiss and make up.
Princesses kiss frogs in search of a prince.
I hope I never need the kiss of life.
Pope Francis, (who doesn't want us to kiss his ring as we used to do to honour Bishops) kissed the feet of politicians imploring them not to go to war.
We've kissed the Wood of the Cross on Good Friday since the fourth century.
Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

At 3pm I'll venerate the Cross...with my kiss.

Focus sharpened by the effects of today's fasting and abstinence, I prepare in my mind and heart for what my kiss will mean today.

**I adore Your Cross, O Lord,
I give praise and glorify Your holy Resurrection,
for because of the wood of the Cross
joy has come to the whole world.**



Holy Saturday

Risen from the dead

Read Romans 6:3–11 and Mark 16:1–8

Jesus died on the Cross on Good Friday. Today he lies dead in the tomb, guarded by soldiers. Friends and family are devastated at the loss of their loved one (we've all been there).

In church, the tabernacle lies empty. There's no Mass today, but Sacraments can be offered to the sick. No baptisms, no weddings! Morning Prayer etc. is encouraged and can place us spiritually in the context of this day. Acknowledging these sombre liturgical restrictions can help us experience the reality of Christ's death. On Holy Saturday, we should not avoid feeling the silent chill of the tomb.

Of course, death is not the end of the story!

Reading St Paul's Letter to the Romans (6: 3-11) provides a great bridge from Holy Saturday into Easter. We're used to thinking of Baptism as a wee trickle of water over a baby's head, but St Paul's Christians would have gone into a mass of water and emerged as re-born! Christ went into the tomb and emerged resurrected! Going into a Baptismal Font was like going into a grave, but you emerged as a new being, a Christian! "If we have died with him, then we shall live with him." Romans 6:8

Once the sun sets, we enter into Easter. Fire (literally), earth (the grave), water (baptism), air (the wind of the Holy Spirit breathing on the waters), all provide opportunities for our minds and senses to engage, experience and give expression to our faith: He is risen! We are the Easter People and our God reigns!

Of course, the world around us acts as if there is no Resurrection at all. War, poverty, drought, gender-based violence...

Strengthened, nourished and inspired by our Holy Week celebrations, the Easter People are impelled into action as the agents of Christ's love in the world. The world will know we are Christians by our love!

Risen Lord, very often the Scriptures that announce Your Resurrection tell of the women who were among your closest followers. May I never forget the presence of women in the Church, then and now. And, this Easter, may I renew my commitment to be an agent of Your loving presence in the world. Amen.