

MEDITATION ON THE WAY OF THE CROSS

1/ PILATE CONDEMNS JESUS

Why did Pontius Pilate hand Jesus over to the Jews to be crucified?
Perhaps it was because he was afraid.
He didn't want any trouble – rioting, even the possibility of an uprising.
He was wise enough to realise that the Sanhedrin did not have a case against Jesus.
He could have stopped it all there and then!
But he did not.
Maybe he was just a coward,
Weak, before the powerful, moral strength of Jesus.
Perhaps he was afraid of Jesus too.
Even his wife had had a strange dream about Jesus and had warned Pilate to have nothing to do with Him.
Pilate had hoped to set Jesus free by offering the crowd a choice between Jesus and Barabbas;
He was not bargaining on the well organised campaign against Jesus orchestrated by the Pharisees.
Pilate played judge. The boisterous crowd became the jury, yelling for Jesus' blood.
So Pontius Pilate washed his hands in a public ritual act,
Thus ceremoniously absolving himself of what would inevitably follow.
He walked away and just let them get on with it!
Though he was kept informed of what went on.
“Better that one man should die for the people!”

Sometimes I can be a coward.
I fear God for all the wrong reasons, seeing him as a vengeful figure.
Yet all that He wants to give to me and to receive from me is Love.
God is love – love is good – “Only God is good.”
The whole gospel can be summed up in a single word:-
Love.
He commands me to love my neighbour as myself;
And that really means every other human being.
Sometimes I don't really want to get involved when perhaps I should;
When I might be the only person who could actually make a difference.
I would rather wash my hands of a situation than go out of my way to help somebody;
Just leave it to everybody else to take positive action.
I don't always stand up for those who need my help, like the poor or the unborn.
I am afraid of looking stupid in front of others by defending those who cannot defend themselves.
I do not want to lose face with others by intervening to save somebody else from being badly or unfairly treated.
I allow my own selfishness to get in the way.
When I think or act like that I am there with Pilate, condemning Jesus to death.
My silence can be tantamount to agreement with wrongdoing.
And thus I wash my hands of all responsibility.
But surely it's not my responsibility!
Or is it?
My silence can be enough to judge another person unjustly.
In my heart and by my words I am often quick to judge others.
“Judge not and you shall not be judged!”

2/ JESUS RECEIVES HIS CROSS

Jesus knew this was going to happen eventually.
He had warned his disciples that He would be put to death.
At the last supper He knew He had been betrayed to the chief priests, and by whom.
“It is he who dips his hand in the bowl with Me.”
And so Judas was exposed.
“Go and do whatever it is you have to do!”
In the garden of Gethsemane Christ had asked his Father that He be spared this horror:
“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.”
“Yet, not My will but Thy will be done!”
And now He received the heavy weight of the wooden cross upon His shoulders.
Some of us see the cross as being forced upon Jesus.
Yet, look again..... do you not see Him raising His arms to humbly and willingly accept it?
It is most likely He had to carry the cross piece on its own
As the upright part may have already been in place on Golgotha,
Since it was a regular crucifixion site.
Yet still it was an exceedingly heavy piece of wood.
So He began the journey towards Calvary,
To do what He had come to do.
To die for us.

The weight of the cross on His shoulders represents sin;
The sins of the whole world, borne by Him:
“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”.
The weight of the cross includes my own sins, even the ones I have yet to commit.
And since every sin wounds Christ, my part in all this is by no means insignificant.
I am just as responsible as the next person.
I am not perfect as my Heavenly Father is perfect.
What a lot it seems for a simple human being to aim for!
But then I am forgetting my soul,
That supernatural part of me which is like Him.
Do I really appreciate what Jesus did for me?
He carried the weight of my sins on that fateful day.
He carries me when I need His help,
Though as a rule I fail to notice this.
Divine providence is for real.
Some would prefer to say it is just chance!
There are those who would seek to remove the cross from view,
Claiming that it causes offence and shock to people.
They are playing into the hands of evil.
The figure of Christ, hanging, dead on the cross
Is a necessary reminder of the effects of sin on the world.
And more powerfully still it is a constant reminder
Of Christ’s victory over sin
Through the power of the cross.
“We adore Thee, Oh, Christ, and we praise Thee,
Because by Thy Holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world!”

3/ THE FIRST FALL

Why did Jesus even fall in the first place?
Why did He not simply walk away from it all?
It was the reason He came into the world.
As he struggled along with the heavy cross on His back,
Already having endured several hours of torture and lack of sleep,
It is not surprising that He should stumble and crash to the ground.
He was born into the world as a human being, although divine.
Yet despite His divinity
He experienced life just like everybody else;
The ups as well as the downs.
There was no cheating involved,
Though we know that Satan did his best to
Upset God's plan from the time of Jesus' birth,
Resulting in the death of the Holy Innocents at the hand of Herod.
Then he tempted Jesus in the desert.
No doubt he was there until the end,
Desperately trying to undermine the will of God.
And Jesus went through all of this,
Whatever the cost to Himself.....
For me!

By this fall my Saviour is demonstrating to me an obvious truth-
That like every human being I am spiritually weak.
This is more than just a physically weak human being falling under the weight of a cross.
It is a sign to me that I am vulnerable on my journey through this life.
I shall be tempted relentlessly.
And I shall indeed fall time and again.
I should not be so proud as to think that I am exempt from failure.
And sometimes I just have to accept it.
Of course I need to try my best to do something about it whenever it happens
Or maybe if and when I can see it coming.
If I can remember that Jesus fell, albeit only physically,
Maybe I can then come to realise that He is with me even when I fall into sin.
He catches me at that moment and lifts me up again.
"And holds me in the palm of His hand."

4/ JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

This has to have been the most painful and poignant meeting of all time!
Powerless to prevent what was happening to her son,
Mary became an unwilling partaker in this horrific story as it continued to unfold.
Through all the blood and pain and misery, the eyes of mother and son met.
Love is all that can have passed between them, even if by just one look.
Through Mary's mind must have rushed all the events which had led to that moment -
Perhaps it was as if her entire life flashed before her when she saw Him.
By her presence Our Lady reassured her son that she was still there for Him.
From the time the angel Gabriel had appeared to her she must always have known
That life would never be in the least bit ordinary for her.
But could she ever have imagined this?
She continued to love Him and, had she been able, she would probably have rushed to pick Him up and
Comfort Him when He fell, just as she might have done when He was a boy.

Any mother looking on at this point can in some way empathise with Mary.
Perhaps, indeed, any parent can in some way join with her in her helplessness.
Many a time their own children have become estranged from them.
Growing up and growing apart;
The struggle for independence and the desire escape from the shackles of authority;
Making their own mark on the world;
Parents fear losing control and their children simply cannot wait to live their own lives
According to their own values and ideals.
Equally parents tend to know what is best for their children;
Indeed the law of the land makes them responsible.
Parents work hard to prepare their children in every possible way for their independence.
Whatever it is that separates parents from their children,
They will always need one another.
Sometimes just being there is all that matters.
Sometimes just being there is all that is possible.
We have to accept that, in many situations we may have little or no control over events;
We may have to stand by helplessly and watch things happen, no matter how painful that might be.
We must all try to accept one another's limitations;
But we must also accept our own.
And who can we turn to in these and other difficult situations?
Our Lady herself.
The perfect example of Christ is His mother.
She is our mother too.
She loves us as she loved her only son.
To Jesus through Mary.
"Do whatever He tells you!"

5/ SIMON OF CYRENE IS MADE TO HELP

A man named Simon just happened to be in town that day from his home in Cyrene.
He is said to have been the father of Alexander and Rufus and to have later on become a Christian.

Either through curiosity or by sheer chance he found himself in the crowd,
Watching the rather strange procession that was passing by.

Perhaps, from his point of view he was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

But as far as Jesus was concerned, Simon was in the right place at the right time!

The soldiers and the Jews wanted to be sure that Jesus got to His place of execution,
Still alive, in order that they could go on to complete His humiliation by crucifying Him.

So they forced Simon, probably under threat of violence or death, to carry the cross.

No doubt reluctantly and unhappily, Simon complied with their orders.

He took upon his own shoulders the cross; the instrument of our salvation.

At the time he had no idea what he was doing.

He was actually helping God out;

He was being like Jesus – to Jesus.

If I am cornered for any reason, I tend to feel somewhat uncomfortable about it.

Who wants to be forced into doing something they do not want to do?

For me it may just be drawing the short straw and doing a household chore;

It may be just staying in and keeping somebody else company when I would rather be elsewhere;

It may be being unjustly accused something I have not done;

Going out in the cold weather to fetch something;

Having to watch someone else's favourite programme on television,

When I would rather switch over;

Giving way to the needs of others rather than acting upon my own selfish desires.

Whatever it is I would definitely rather not be doing it.

I certainly can't see the good in doing it at the time.

I find self sacrifice neither easy nor desirable.

Yet even the smallest act of love is of value.

Yet Jesus said quite plainly:-

“If you do this to the least of these little ones you do it to Me”.

Think about it!

6/ VERONICA'S ACT OF CHARITY

Veronica, like many others, witnessed the shocking sight of Jesus carrying His cross;
His face covered in blood and sweat.
The violent scene which Veronica encountered was that of a whole host of men
Whose job it was to make sure that Jesus made it from Jerusalem to his place of execution.
Anybody getting in the way certainly did so at great personal risk.
It was far worse for a woman to get in the way of things in those times.
But Veronica had only compassion in her heart for the man she saw pass by her house.
She showed great pity and rushed towards Him, carrying a cool, wet cloth.
And she reached out and wiped the blood and sweat from the face of Our Lord.
It is said that Jesus' face left a clear impression on the towel.
Like Simon earlier, Veronica was being like Jesus to Jesus.
She was soon pushed out of the way.
And the procession continued.

Whether or not she knew who Jesus was, Veronica reached out to help Him.
She risked physical harm and ridicule in doing so;
She put herself on the line.
How often do I do that?
Speaking up for what is right;
Speaking out against injustice;
Standing up and being counted;
Helping the poor and needy does not come easily to me;
The lame, the disfigured, the down-and-out; the immigrant;
The list goes on and on!
They are all God's children too.
My neighbours.
How often do I do think of those less fortunate than myself, let alone actually help them?
I can be very selfish sometimes.
But who really wants to be noticed for these reasons?
Who wants to look stupid – to be laughed at?
Who wants to be disliked and maybe even hated for sticking their necks out for others?
It's rather like Pilate again –
He wouldn't take the risk.
As the martyrs are my witnesses, I should literally be prepared to lose my life for the sake of the truth!
"Greater love has no one than to lay down one's life for one's friends!"
And as Mother Theresa once said, "Give until it hurts!"
Can I meet that challenge?

7/ JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME

It should not surprise us that Jesus fell again during this journey.
He had every intention of carrying out the will of the Father.
He was fully human and fully divine.
He did not abuse that divinity in order to escape the harshness of humanity.
He was followed, but never a follower.
“You did not choose Me. No, I chose you!”
And so He continued on His way, the heavy cross upon His shoulders.
And in His human body he found it difficult to cope with all the stress and strain,
Already severely beaten before He even began this journey.
The cross He chose to bear -
It went with the territory.
And having crashed to the ground under the weight of that cross,
He still somehow managed to recover and continue with His ordeal.
Not without a certain amount of goading from his persecutors.
His trust in the Father was absolute.

Christ invites me:-
“Take up your cross and follow Me”.
Perhaps here and now I can accompany Jesus to Calvary bearing my own cross.
It is said that God never gives us more to handle than we can cope with.
Accepting failure in the eyes of other people is something I shy away from;
I would rather nobody knew I had any weaknesses;
The world’s distorted view of things blinds me.
God knew how much He could expect of His only Son:
Obedience to the point of death.
Jesus, on His journey, kept going.
Every time I sin, I fall metaphorically.
Through the sacrament of reconciliation I am invited to seek His gentle help,
With the priest as His conduit;
To seek God’s forgiveness and get up again by the help of His unseen but very real gift of grace.
If I can only just picture Jesus beside me when I fall;
Ask Him for the help of His grace to continue along the road to my own personal Calvary;
See Him with the eyes of faith;
Admit that without Him I am nothing;
Let Him help me up!
He wants to help me, but He seeks my invitation to do so!
And He asks that I trust Him just as He trusted His Father.

8/ THE SORROWFUL WOMEN

Many people watched the procession wending its way through the streets.
Amongst them was a group of women who may well have been sympathisers of Jesus.
Perhaps they had been at some of the gatherings when Jesus had taught the crowds;

Maybe they had witnessed some of His miracles.
They were as powerless as all the other people there;
They showed their solidarity in a very natural way:
They wept for Him.

Nobody but Jesus really knew how things would turn out.
He was able to see way beyond that day, as He turned to those women and said:-
“Daughters of Jerusalem. Do not weep for me!”
“Weep instead for yourselves and for your children!”
Perhaps He was referring here to the final judgement.
He also knew, of course, that within a few short years Jerusalem would be laid in ruins
And many of its people put to death.
The temple would be destroyed.
But the temple which was Himself would be rebuilt within three days,
Just as He had prophesied.
But people generally don't understand prophesy until after the event!

Sometimes when we recall Jesus on the road to His death in this way,
We can close our eyes and imagine ourselves being there, watching Him go by.
And, as sometimes happens when we see a poignant scene in a film,
We might well get taken up in all the emotional turmoil and weep.
Perhaps we regret our own sin and how it contributed to all this
And maybe we also feel genuinely upset at seeing Our Lord in such a terrible situation.
We may weep when seeing the plight of the poor on our screens;
We may weep when we hear of injury and death caused by terrorism, knife crime and drugs,
Natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, mudslides, famine;
The terrible scars caused by war and ethnic cleansing.
We may weep when we find that we, too, are helpless because of things which are beyond our own control.
We may weep at the death of a loved one.
And we are right to weep.
It is very human.
It is quite natural.
Our compassion for others is sometimes all we can give to them.
Just being there for them in our own way.
Mourning is no substitute for real action when we have the power to act.
But for now it might be the only way in which we can show our solidarity with those in need.
It is what we mourn for that is important.
Mourning for the material things of this world is fruitless.
So let us mourn for all that is wrong in the world,
For injustice in all its forms;
For all those who cause evil
As well as those who suffer as a result of it.
Moral support where practical support is not possible.
Some day it will bear fruit.

9/ THE THIRD FALL

Each step on His journey weakened Him still further,
His strength gradually draining away
As He approached the place at which He was to be put to death.
There is little doubt that Our Lord fell several times,
Though only three falls in particular are recorded in the Gospels.
Every fall was another reminder of Jesus' very human physical exhaustion.
"Like us in all things but sin".
No doubt He had suffered from all the usual childhood illnesses
Through which his mother would have nursed Him.
Maybe He had fallen now and then and grazed His knee or hurt His head;
Perhaps, as a carpenter, He had occasionally hit His thumb with His hammer,
Or driven splinters into His fingers.
He ate, drank, slept and lived like any other human being
And would die like one by the most infamous and brutal method ever devised by the Romans.
Having crashed to the ground,
He did not fail to get up and continue on to His death.
He had a goal and He stuck to it.
Happy are we that He did just that!

When children fall over, they will most likely scream and cry.
Their parents will rush to pick them up and offer whatever comfort they can.
After a while the children will recover and be all smiles once again.
Until the next time.
And so it goes on.
We are all children of God.
It is to Him that we should turn when things go wrong for us.
Perhaps we expect Him to rush to pick us up, dust us down and set us on our way again.
But we cannot see Him without the eyes of faith.
Sometimes we quite understandably get angry with God;
It can lead us to doubt Him.
It might lead to a crisis of faith.
In the beautiful words from the poem "Footsteps" Jesus responds:-
"In those times when you see only one set of footsteps in the sand – then I was carrying you!"
How God actually helps us is often by sending somebody else to our aid.
Just as we should help others,
So others will find it in their hearts to help us.
Simon of Cyrene and Veronica are two examples among many.
Being Christ to those around us.
On the road to heaven there are many pitfalls, trials and tribulations ahead of us.
Jesus encourages us, by getting up and moving on, not giving up.
Just as He had as His goal the salvation of all humanity,
Our goal is the reward of eternal life in heaven,
By following the example of Christ in our lives.
To get there we must never give up trying,
However many times we may fall into sin.

10/ HIS CLOTHING IS TAKEN FROM HIM

Jesus reached the place where He was to be executed.
Now came the humiliation of being stripped of all His clothing, save that which preserved His modesty;
The Romans were brutal but even they exercised just a modicum of respect.
Nobody realised, of course, that Jesus was God made man – indeed God who made man in His own image.
Earlier he had been dressed in a purple robe; a reed placed in His hand
And a crown of thorns upon His head.
Then He had been mocked by the Roman soldiers.
Now the opposite happened,
Though it was just as humiliating.
And the mockery continued.
The King of love Himself was stripped in front of the crowd.
We know that He accepted this without complaint.
His dignity and purpose remained intact.
He did not fight it;
“Like a lamb to the slaughter”.
Humility personified.

With hindsight we look upon Jesus in His humiliation and we are shocked by it.
And so we should be!
He bore that humiliation for us and as an example to us all.
But when we are humiliated we do not tend to be able to accept it.
We may even seek revenge on those responsible;
We may perhaps seek legal retribution in some instances.
We want our pound of flesh;
We want justice for ourselves;
We want to be the ones in the right;
We must have recompense!
How often do we simply accept a situation?
How often do we know when to just walk away?
How often do we forgive and forget?
There are bigger injustices in the world which deserve both our attention and our action.
We have to look outside of ourselves in order to deal with them,
Even if it means being humiliated in the process.
Humility is not necessarily about bowing and scraping to others.
It is more about accepting that we are not always the focus of attention.
Sometimes we need to step back and let others take centre stage.
We also need to remove from our lives all those things which hold us back from God.
All those earthly things which complicate our lives so unnecessarily,
Just as Christ was stripped of His clothes in front of all those onlookers.
Repentance is not easy!

11/ NAILED TO THE CROSS

They laid Him down and restrained Him.
Then they drove iron spikes through His wrists
And, placing His feet on a plinth, they nailed them through;
His knees were slightly bent.
Then they hauled the cross into an upright position
And just left Him hanging there.
Somebody climbed up and placed a notice above His head which read:
"Jesus of Nazareth – King of the Jews"
Much to the annoyance of the Pharisees but
On the insistence of Pilate.
"What I have written, I have written!"
Beneath Him stood his Mother and Mary Magdalene
And John, the beloved disciple, amongst others.
Either side of Him they placed two common criminals, also crucified.
The "good" thief rebuked the "bad" thief, admitting their guilt but protesting Jesus' innocence,
And then he said to the Lord:
"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!"
Jesus replied
"Truly I say to you, this very day you will be with Me in Paradise!"
Christ pardoned those who had done this to Him:
"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!"
He handed the care of His Mother and John, each to the other.
And there He remained for three hours!

When I sin, I contribute to the nails;
When I sin, I add to the pain;
When I sin He goes through it all again.
Even though this is what He came for, I still have a share of the guilt.
Through His great sacrifice, He would conquer sin forever.
The cross was the instrument by which He achieved this.
He gave me an example by forgiving those who had done this to Him.
I can receive the same offer through my repentance.
I can ask God's forgiveness;
But I must genuinely pardon others too:-
"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."
And what a great and comforting promise He made to the "good" thief.
How I yearn for Jesus to say that gently to me at the time of my own death:
"Today you will be with me in Paradise!"
All my sins are forgiven when I repent of them.
And especially when I avail myself of the Sacrament of Reconciliation
There is truly hope even for me.
And now, here I stand at the foot of the cross,
In the company of His mother and I look up at Him.
I helped put Him there.
Yet He forgives me unreservedly.
Why do I find it so hard to do the same?

12/ JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

It is recorded in the gospels that Jesus spent three hours in agony on the cross.

Three hours that must have felt like years.

Three hours during which the blood gradually drained from His Body.

We cannot even begin to imagine the real pain He endured in His human form.

Having taken care of His mother's future welfare, promised paradise to the "good" thief

And forgiven all those who had caused Him harm, He cried out:-

"I thirst!"

They put a sponge, soaked in bitter vinegar, on a reed,

Putting it to His lips for Him to drink.

He quoted from scripture, calling out:

"My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?"

Some thought He was invoking the prophet Elijah.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus had asked his Father to

Release Him from this dreadful obligation.

"Yet not My will but Thy will be done."

And the Father's will was being done there and then.

And so His last words were these:-

"It.....is.....finished!"

Thus He gave up His last breath,

Bowed His head

And died.

And there were storms and earthquakes!

The temple curtain was ripped apart –

This had symbolised the separation of God from his people in the temple.

Jesus, through His death, removed all barriers.

Now people could come to the Father through Him!

This was not just anybody who had just died.

"Indeed this was the Son of God!"

Yes, Jesus really, truly died.

The Spirit left His body just as our soul will leave ours when it comes to our turn.

Jesus became sin personified

So that sin could be nailed to the cross,

The instrument of our salvation;

The instrument by which sin was conquered.

"Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

Every time we see a crucifix it reminds us of His suffering for us;

Every time we see a crucifix we recall the tremendous sacrifice Christ made for us.

Every time we see a crucifix we need to make sure we do not take it for granted.

He died for all the sins of the world, even those which have not yet been committed.

He died for the sake of every single person who has lived or will ever live.

"And I, when I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself!"

A crucifix does indeed draw people towards it and to question it.

It is a sign of our faith.

We should not fear it.

For by it we have a way forward into eternity.

"Unless a grain of wheat shall fall into the earth and die, it remains but a single grain, with no life."

Jesus is that grain of wheat.

"Through His wounds, we are healed."

This is not just about dying and being born to eternal life with Him.

It is about dying to all that is not of Christ,

Dying to all that is of the world.

And being reborn in Him.

That is true healing.

13/ HIS BODY IS TAKEN DOWN

A soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear, just to make sure He was dead.
Blood and water came out of the wound where His lungs were punctured.
And to this day a small drop of water is added to the wine at the consecration of the Mass
To commemorate this momentous event:-

The birth of His Church.

In some paintings this occurrence is shown by way of an angel
Collecting the Precious Blood and water into a chalice as they spill out.
The soldiers removed the nails and lowered the dead body of Jesus to the ground.
And there remained his Mother and John and those others who had not fled in fear.
And what a moving scene as the lifeless body of Christ was placed into His mother's arms -
A moment captured so tenderly in Michelangelo's famous statue, "The Pieta".
Our Lady had spent three hours keeping watch below the cross,
Not to mention all that had happened prior to that.
She remained faithful to her son to the bitter end.
For she believed in Him and knew that He was very special.
She had witnessed more than enough, from the time the angel Gabriel had appeared to her,
To know that her son was from God.
What must she have felt and thought about as she held His dead body close to her and wept?
What mother would not mourn the loss of her child?
Mary was a human being, too, let us not forget.
"Behold the handmaiden of the Lord!"
"Be it done to me according to thy word!"
By saying "Yes" to God's plan for her she had enabled God to
Do what He had planned to do, and for which He had asked her willing cooperation;
He had asked her to give herself totally to Himself.
This she had done without question.
In the temple, Simeon had prophesied:-
"A sword shall pierce your heart".
And how true it had turned out to be!

How quickly life is extinguished!

How changed a body is when the soul has flown!

Any parents who have lost their own children must identify with Our Lady in a very special way.
To know that even the mother of Jesus had to watch her son being tortured and killed in front of her,
Can be a source of strength for those bereaved parents.

By that time Mary's husband had already died

So she was already without the support of Joseph.

And how everybody rallied round and took care of her!

In particular John took her into his own home at Jesus' request.

We often fail to see the positive side of death,

Which is somewhat surprising

Given that eternal life is something we all look forward to.

We spend so much time trying not to die that often we forget to live our lives.

At the other extreme, we are so busy trying to pack as much as possible into our lives

That we can easily forget that one day we shall indeed die.

We came into this world with nothing,

And we cannot take anything with us!

When a loved one dies,

And if we are not surrounded by the love of others at the time,

We can easily become so consumed with our sorrow that we can turn in on ourselves.

Oh we of little faith!

Simple human beings. Lost sheep.

As children we cannot wait to be old enough to be independent.

And when we get there we wish we had never grown up!

"Remember man that thou art dust and unto dust you shall return!"

"Repent and believe in the gospel!"

14/ THE TOMB

Jesus had never had anything that was His own as such.
When He was born it was in somebody else's stable;
His earthly father, Joseph, was His foster father.
His mother agreed to conceive and bear Him in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Thus she rightly holds the title "Mother of God".
For much of His early life Jesus had no home to call his own, constantly moving about
In order to avoid earlier attempts on His life.
And now He was laid to rest in a tomb which belonged to somebody else.
He came into the world with nothing and He now left it for a while with nothing.
No burdens,
No baggage,
His work on earth was almost complete.
Since it was now the Sabbath, and due to the strict rules surrounding this time of the week,
It was not possible to prepare His body properly for burial according to custom.
So that task would have to wait.
"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath!"
These words would take some time to sink in!
The stone was rolled across the mouth of the tomb.
Everybody left for home until the first day of the week,
When they would return to embalm the Lord's Body.
All concerned were exhausted both physically and emotionally.
And as far as they were concerned,
That was the end!

Most of us have attended the funeral of a friend or relative at some time.
This final farewell can help to give us some kind of sense of closure.
All we have is the lifeless body of that person, whose spirit has left.
And we deal with their mortal remains in the manner in which they have requested.
Emotion plays a great part.
The comforting ceremonies, with their prayers and words of scripture,
Provided by our faith and spoken by a priest,
Help us to deal with what has happened and what we firmly believe will happen.
Nevertheless such moments tend to shake our faith.
We ask "Why, Lord?"
The memories linger on in our hearts.
Some of us will never really get over the loss of those we loved.
This is where our faith can be severely tested.
If we can only truly believe and hold onto all that scripture tells us.
Jesus has gone ahead and paved a way for all of us to enter into eternal life with Him.
He understands all our faults and failings
And He wants us to repent and be forgiven.
He too entered the world by way of the womb
And left it by way of the tomb.
The eyes of faith see beyond death, beyond the cross
Into His eternal love.
"I know that my Redeemer lives."

