

Good Friday

The Gospel according to John, whose account of Our Lord's passion and death we hear every Good Friday, is a gospel of *encounters*. Jesus and Nicodemus; Jesus and the Samaritan woman; Jesus and the man born blind, Martha and Mary; and, in the midst of his Passion, Jesus and Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate.

In each of these encounters Jesus invites a person to *metanoia*, the Greek word for to think in a new way, to accept a new reality.

So, to the Samaritan woman: "*The hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem*" (4:21).

To the man born blind: "*Do you believe in the Son of Man? [...] You have seen him and the one speaking with you is he*" (9:35, 37).

To Pilate: "*Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice*" (18:37).

The Gospel of John, then, is about being open and about choices, taking a stand. In some of these encounters, the choice will be for Jesus. The Samaritan woman goes off to tell her village of this man who could be the Messiah. The man whose sight is restored professes his faith in Jesus and, we're told, bows down and worships him. On the other hand, as I mentioned last night, we're also told that after Jesus' discourse on the Eucharist, the "Bread of Life," "*many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him*" (6:66). Pilate, as we heard, tried to have it both ways, but in the end worldly power won out over divine truth.

This most sober, solemn day of the Christian year is a day for asking sober, serious questions. Each of us claims to have made the choice to follow Jesus, but to what extent can that choice be said to be credible, sincere? To what extent does that choice daily define who we are and how others see us?

If the answers to those questions should disappoint or discourage us, let us not give up hope. If we and others should see ourselves as imperfect, even deeply flawed, Our Lords looks on us with love. And after all, we call this sober day "Good" because at its heart is the truth that for the God of the "*impossible*" (Mk 10:27), out of darkness can come light, out of sin can come redemption, out of tragedy can come glory.