

## Good Friday: April 10, 2009 At the Foot of the Cross

By dying on the Cross—as Saint John tells us—Jesus “gave up his Spirit” anticipating the gift of the Holy Spirit that he would make after his Resurrection. This was to fulfill the promise of “rivers of living water” that would flow out of the hearts of believers, through the outpouring of the Spirit. The Spirit, in fact, is that interior power which harmonizes their hearts with Christ’s heart and moves them to love their brethren as Christ loved them, when he bent down to wash the feet of the disciples and above all when he gave his life for us. The Spirit is also the energy which transforms the heart of the ecclesial community, so that it becomes a witness before the world to the love of the Father, who wishes to make humanity a single family in his Son. The entire activity of the Church is an expression of a love that seeks the integral good of all humans.

—Pope Benedict XVI, *God is Love*, #19

### Introduction:

The end of all our Lenten journeys happens in the days of Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday. The death of Christ is linked with the Resurrection that followed; we must observe both these mysteries, in our hearts as well as in community rituals. The pilgrimage of Lent ends in dying and rebirth; it signals a new journey for us, witnessing with our words, our actions, and the way we live our lives, that God is love who gives himself so we may have life. The inner contemplation and the rigors of “seeing and reflecting” during Lent give birth to a new way of being in the world. As our hearts are renewed through the Lenten pilgrimage, our capacity for love and compassion is deepened. After this holy time, we can reaffirm that we have been redeemed, and we welcome the new energy of the Spirit, moving us forward to be engaged with justice and peace issues, in the Middle East and in other areas of the world.



Reading 1: [Is 52:13—53:12](#)

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25](#)

R. (Lk 23:46) **Father, into your hands I commend my spirit**

Reading II: [Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9](#)

Gospel: [Jn 18:1—19:42](#)

### Scripture: John 18: 19-21

The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his doctrine. Jesus answered him, “I have spoken publicly to the world. I have always taught in a synagogue or in the temple area where all the Jews gather, and in secret I have said nothing. Why ask me? Ask those who heard me what I said to them. They know what I said.”

### Reflection:

When Jesus is arrested, he is asked to speak, but he points to the people who have heard his Word. Now it is the time for the people of God to witness to Christ’s teachings, he implies; they have heard the call. The question for them, for us, is can we respond with our own words, with our own lives? Our Lenten pilgrimage has led to this point: can we be bearers of the Word, can we witness with our lives, can we be present to the enormous suffering of Good Friday, the suffering of our own world and to the hope of the Resurrection? These last days on pilgrimage call for focused times of contemplation on the Love that gives completely; we empty ourselves fully so the Spirit can enter and so we can become in our actions the words of love, hope, peace and compassion that Christ offered to us. The Holy Land reverberates with these words spoken two thousand years ago; how do we echo them in the way we will live our lives after this journey, how do we echo them in loving action and in hopeful peacemaking?



## Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

- What can you bring to your observance of Good Friday that has been nurtured through your Lenten pilgrimage?
- What will help you focus on being in the presence of the suffering of Christ during this day?
- As you look ahead to Easter, reflect on the importance of hope as we try to be witnesses in the world to God's love. How do we nurture deep in our hearts hope for a more compassionate and peaceful world?
- What can support you as you return from a Lenten journey and see new possibilities in ways of living as a person of faith?
- What are ways you can develop a commitment to be a part of peace making communities? What can help you continue to learn about the Middle East conflict, to pray and to be open to act for peace in the Middle East, and in all conflict areas?

## Web Link:

### Caritas-Jerusalem



Caritas-Jerusalem(CJ) is a Jerusalem-based humanitarian/developmental organization that represents the socio-pastoral services of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land. It was founded in 1967 in the aftermath of the Six Day War.

CJ's mission is to empower the Palestinian people to realize their full potential and to act as a voice for the voiceless. They serve the social-familial, economic, health, and emergency needs of an ever-growing Palestinian population. They have a presence throughout the Palestinian Territories, which are the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem.

The vision of CJ is grounded in the example of the life of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Social Teachings.

**Link:** <http://www.caritasjr.org/default.asp>

## Learn about the roots of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict:

**2007:** Mecca Agreement, brokered by Saudi Arabia, reached between Hamas and Fatah. Palestinian Unity Government formed in March. Hamas takeover of Gaza in June, leads to breakup of unity government and appointment of Salam Fayyad as new PM of PA. Annapolis Mid-east peace conference takes place without Hamas and with all Arab League nations participating including Syria and Saudi Arabia. Annapolis concludes with PM Olmert and President Abbas agreeing to a "joint understanding" to "make every effort to conclude an agreement before the end of 2008."

**2008:** In January, Israel closes all border crossings with Gaza to halt Palestinian rocket attacks. Palestinian militants bomb the Rafah border and tens of thousands of Gazans cross the border into Egypt. In June, a Gaza cease-fire is brokered between Hamas and Israel by Egyptian intermediaries. On December 27, 2008 Israel renewed its bombing campaign on Gaza. Over 1,400+ people were killed in Gaza, mostly innocent civilians. Israel's military offensive and the rockets fired by Hamas were in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

**2009:** A tentative truce was announced on January 19, 2009.

## Prayer:

Christ, You asked your disciples to be with you in your agony;  
 give us the strength to be present to your sufferings  
 and to the sufferings of your children,  
 in the Holy Land and throughout the world.  
 And when we have grieved, give us the ability to be fully open  
 to the Easter hope you offer to us.  
 Make our lives a witness to your Word.  
 Through our love and our commitment to peace and justice,  
 may your teachings echo in this world.  
 May we become more and more open to the Spirit so we can be filled  
 completely with the light of your grace.  
 May we become your light to a world in darkness. Amen