



WEEK TWO: The Scourging at the Pillar

Praying with the Sorrowful Mysteries: Jesuit Communications offers a series of reflections around the five Sorrowful Mysteries. **This week, we explore the Scourging at the Pillar.**



Gospel reading: Luke 23:22-25; John 19:1; Matthew 27:26

Reflection

In the second mystery, Jesus is scourged at the pillar. The people reject Jesus the King of peace, instead opting to support a violent Barabbas. Pilate sends Jesus to be flogged. The act of scourging effects incredible physical suffering on the person of Jesus. He is handed over into the hands of a vicious mob caught up in a contagion of violence. Jesus knows the worst brutality possible for a human being to endure. This is the day of persecution, when consolation comes through remembering: God is with me.

- 1 As Jesus is bullied by the crowd, where do you imagine yourself standing?
- 2 What do you see in Jesus as he becomes an innocent victim?
- 3 What is your gut response to Jesus' nonviolence?
- 4 In my own life, when have I felt close with Jesus in his suffering?
- 5 Justin Glyn writes of 'the loving solidarity of Christ' as he shares in the experience of those being scourged today. Who do I see now being scourged?

Using these resources

Parishes and prayer groups: Feel free to print out and share these reflections, attach them to parish bulletins, or post them on parish websites or Facebook pages.



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#seasonofconsolation



The scourging of the marginalised

Fr Justin Glyn SJ reflects on the experiences of the voiceless and the powerless, and poses a challenge: How do each of us respond to their pain and suffering?

As I walked out through the gates of Maribyrnong Immigration Detention Centre, I felt a sense of hope.

Visiting had been made harder and harder (it is now virtually impossible). I had been to see Mahmoud (not his real name), a man who had fled persecution in his Middle Eastern homeland. He had a family in Melbourne and had managed to secure the services of a migration agent to progress his family's refugee claims which the Government had refused to process. He was looking for character evidence and people had testified to how kind a man he was and how his family (including children with complex needs) were suffering under the strain of separation from a husband and father. Light seemed on the horizon as it seemed that finally there would be a chance to put his case.

Within a week, however, hopes were dashed. The following Friday, I discovered that, in one of the 3am removals which are a hallmark of the immigration authorities, Mahmoud had been taken from his bed and sent to Christmas Island, where communication with his agent was difficult and with family almost impossible.

As a lawyer and priest, I have always thought the justice of God to be more than a figure of speech. The idea that we somehow share in the work of God when we redress wrongs to give people what they need and what they are owed is powerful. A typical Australian formulation of the urge to justice is 'the fair go'.

The Scourging at the Pillar, by contrast, reminds us of how often (as in Mahmoud's case above) the system is stacked against the voiceless and the powerless. As with Pilate's decision to scourge a man he knew to be innocent

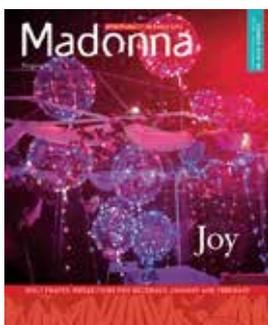


– and finally to send him to the Cross, justice often takes second place to political expedience.

It may have been the voice of the mob which swayed Pilate (as Mark suggests) or the fear of being denounced to Rome by local authorities frightened of a perceived threat to their power (as John proposes). Either way, such considerations were hardly unique to Roman governors. Justice and law can, too often, be handy fictions used by the powerful to cover preying upon the weakest and most vulnerable. The abuse scandal in the Church reminds us that it is not only secular authorities who abuse the faith entrusted in them by society but that power of any kind carries the temptation to evil.

So what consolation lies here? Many will say 'not much', especially if, like many First Peoples, refugees or other marginalised groups, they are familiar with injustice at first hand. Perhaps, however, we can reflect on how, just as we are called to share in God's justice, God has already shared the human experience of injustice: shared it and – in Christ's death and resurrection – overcome it. The loving solidarity of Christ has overcome the torture chamber and the show trial. If we are serious about being his followers, though, how do we respond when we see him scourged in those around us?

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