

The Trial of Jesus

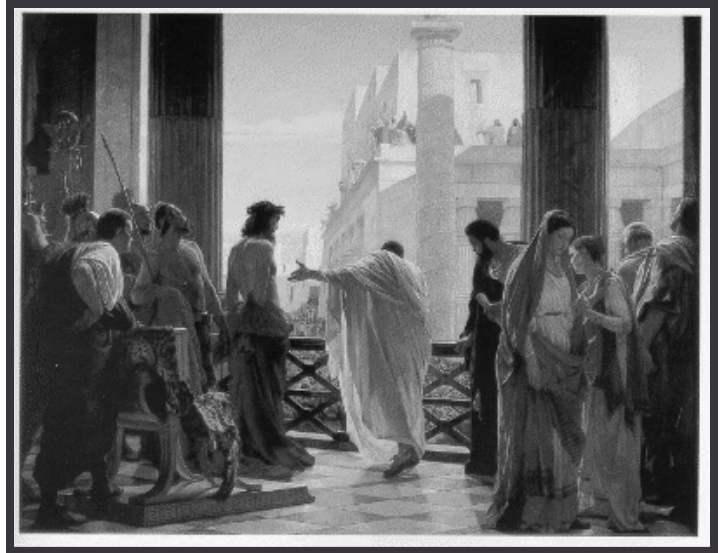
Grace: Ask for the grace of "sorrow with Christ in sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and deep grief because of the great affliction Christ endures for me"

Introduction:

Jesus has been arrested. Can this really be happening? It seems incredible. During this reflection, journey with Jesus as He is led around from one authority figure to another. Back and forth Jesus is processed through the legal systems. It seems like a big political game, some trying to avoid being involved, others angrily scheming to get their own way, and some officials trying to appease both sides.

Who are these people to judge Jesus? It seems perplexing that Jesus who always had so much to say, now of all times, remains so quiet. You are confronted with the fast pace of the trials, the witnesses that come in and lie, and even Peter's denial. Perhaps in a state of confusion you watch and even hope that Jesus will come up with the right phrase at the right moment with the right person and like so many times before just walk away from all of this trouble. And yet in the end the crowds are shouting "Crucify Him!". You watch helplessly and you follow only knowing that you do not like where the road is heading.

At this point, little direction is needed. Pay attention to your feelings and ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and heart to the details of Jesus' passion. Jesus has shared so much of Himself with you and now He desires to share his suffering.



You are not surprised at the force of the storm-
you have seen it growing.
The trees flee. Their flight
sets the boulevards streaming. And you know:
he whom they flee is the one
you move toward. All your senses
sing him, as you stand at the window.
--Rainer Maria Rilke

Luke 22:66 – 23:25 The Trial of Jesus - At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. "If you are the Christ," they said, "tell us." Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God." They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied, "You are right in saying I am." Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips." Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king." So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man." But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here." On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies. Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. Therefore, I will punish him and then release him." With one voice they cried out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him." But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. So Pilate decided to grant their demand. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

Mark 14:53-15:14 The Trial of Jesus - They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together. Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.' Yet even then their testimony did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death. Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophesy!" And the guards took him and beat him. While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said. But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway. When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." Again he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about." Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept. Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate. "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. The chief priests accused him of many things. So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of." But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed. Now it was the custom at the Feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them. "Crucify him!" they shouted. "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"



In these or similar words ... They bring Jesus down to Pilate to be judged. Or at least that's what they say. Everybody knows that they just want him dead. I, Mary his mother, and the other Mary, are in the sea of people waiting to see his fate. We are on the periphery. I will admit, I am frightened that I could be captured and punished with him, but somehow it seems more important to be here right now with him than to do anything else in the world. As he is thrown over to Pilate and Caiphas yells out his alleged crimes, I can hardly keep control over myself. I am angry that they still mess with his words and accuse him of crimes he clearly did not commit. I begin to feel triumphant as Pilate says that he found no crime in this man. But Caiphas persists along with the Sanhedrin. Then they force him back over to Pilate. Pilate says that he finds nothing wrong with him. I am going back and forth between emotions of great triumph and great sadness. Then the sadness prevails, as Pilate says he will punish Jesus. I am upset that he has to suffer for crimes he hasn't committed. But I suppose that it will only be one punishment and then he'll be released. I follow the guards to the... I guess it's a torture chamber. A crowd is already forming there and I blend in with his mother and Mary. At first they use switches to beat him. I see his whole skin begin to welt and turn red and even split open and bleed. With each crack of the stick against his back I shudder and watch as he writhes in pain. Then it appears that they have stopped. I am relieved that this will be all that he has to suffer. But wait! They're now armed with these wooden sticks that have chords coming out of them with shard talons at the end. I begin to tremble as they approach Jesus with them. Then the oaf with the flat head and stupid evil grin digs the shards into Jesus' side and I can hear Jesus scream out. He already has wounds all over himself and must be stinging from just the air touching him. Now though he has cuts all over his back and his skin is basically non-existent. I can do nothing but stare in horror, completely catatonic, and listen to the counting. I try to look away and end the pain of hearing his screams and then pathetic grunts but the soldiers continue to count each beating... undiviginti... viginti... That means 19 and twenty from my limited knowledge of Latin. As they continue to scourge him I can hear them get up into the 40s... now 50s... I'm weeping profusely now as I look up to see what is left of Jesus. I cry out in horror at the sight of his mangled body on the pillar in the middle being tossed about like a rag doll. I hug his mother and Mary and just join in the crying with them and try to find some hope in this moment of greatest despair.

Practicing What Your Preach ... To better understand the trial of Jesus and the reality of what it is like to be considered a criminal, visit someone in jail or prison. Alternatively, consider reading the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishop's statement entitled *A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death* available at: <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/penaltyofdeath.pdf>.