

Holy Saturday



Mark 15:42-47

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where the body was laid.

It took courage for Joseph to offer a place for Jesus' burial, but perhaps it was the least that he could do for apparently he, as a member of the council, had been there when Jesus had been arraigned; had heard the false testimony mounted against him; and watched as he was taken away to be presented to Pilate with the request that he be put to death. Joseph could not stop the unfolding events, but he could at least do this. However, it put him, no doubt, in a difficult position with his fellow council members.

This passage also confirms for us that Jesus did not slip into a coma and was spirited away to awaken at some later time. His body was wrapped for burial and the tomb was properly closed. Plus there were two witnesses who saw where his body had been placed. Jesus was not merely asleep. He was dead.

As he plumbed the depths of our human despair, as he mourned the death of those he loved, so now he entered into the experience of dying. It was only if he died, really died, that he could give his life as a ransom for many. It was only if he died, really died, that he could conquer the power of death through the power of his resurrection from death. And so, on this day we, along with the entire church, wait, just wait for the glad news of the dawn of a new day, the day of days,

Prayer

O come and mourn with me awhile; O come ye to the Savior's side; O come, together let us mourn; Jesus, our Love, is crucified. O love of God! O sin of man! In this dread act your strength is tried; and victory remains with love; for he, our Love, is crucified. Amen

William Frederick Faber, 1849