

Prayer Service for
Mercy Sisters and Associates,
Holy Saturday, 2007.

Theme:

Woman this is your son!

(Jn 19:26).

(Time: approximately 20 - 30 minutes depending on time
allowed for meditating on and claiming the reflection).

GREETING

Provident God, with a deep need to contemplate
all that has happened over the last two most
precious of days, we come before you in
adoration, thanksgiving and worship. Together
we say:

Pardon of our yesterday, we thank you
Sustenance of our to-days, we venerate you
Gift of our tomorrows, we worship you.

Doxology

Glory to you, three in one, your nourishing love
surrounds us. May that grace sustain us now and
forever. **Amen.**

HYMN

Pieta: The Silence and the Sorrow,* or any suitable
hymn or piece of solemn music which will enrich
this reflective prayer and contemplation during
these 'in-between times'.

Antiphon

Is this my Son who turned water into wine at Cana;
who miraculously fed the multitudes on the hillside;
who rode in triumph into Jerusalem last Sabbath? Is
this my Son? **"Woman, this is your son."**



Doxology

Glory to you, three in one, your sustaining love
surrounds us. May that grace sustain us now and
forever. **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READING *John 19:25-30*

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother,
and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas,
and Mary Mag'dalene.

When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple
whom he loved standing near, he said to his
mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said
to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from
that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

After this Jesus, knowing that all was now
finished, said (to fulfil the scripture), "I thirst."

A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a
sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it
to his mouth.

When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It
is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up
his spirit.





REFLECTION

Provident God, this is a day like no other. Is this the day between loss and promise? We lost him yesterday; we mourn him today; what will tomorrow bring? That Gospel haunts me. Jesus' words to Mary echo ceaselessly in me. I was there in disguise by the cross yesterday. I watched him too. He spoke to Mary. **"Woman, this is your son."** Even though she stood resolutely she was shattered. Her concentration was on him hanging on the cross. She was dignified. She must have had to force herself to appear strong for his sake.

"Woman, this is your son."

She looked at Jesus more keenly. All she could see was a battered, torn frame, soaked in blood and with its bones coming through its skin.

This mess! Is this my Son? She questioned within herself in wonderment: Is this the beautiful baby to whom I gave birth in Bethlehem, to the singing of the angels, the excitement of the shepherds and the delight of the Magi? Is this the baby that Simeon saw as the glory of Israel and a light for the Gentiles?

"Woman, this is your son."

Is this my Son, who turned water into wine at Cana; who miraculously fed the multitudes on the hillside; who rode in triumph into Jerusalem last Sabbath? Is this my Son?

"Woman, this is your son." It echoed inside, at me, through me and around me.

I crouched on to my knees feeling her pain, his pain, and my own pain. I could no longer stand. I was stunned. I wondered to myself:

Where did she go wrong? What did she teach him that caused him to make enemies out of the leaders of our people? Did she push the subversive and liberating ideas in her Magnificat too forcefully onto him? Did he feel that he had to liberate our people? Even the priests and the Jewish Hierarchy despised him.

"Woman, this is your Son!"

They accused him of being an agitator, a blasphemer, a pretender. They jeered at him. How I wished they'd stop! It was too much for him and for me. Did I hear him calling on You to forgive them? Forgive them! Forgive me! Forgive all of us! Forgive, forgive, forgive...

"Woman, this is your son."

I listened even more intently. He spoke again: **"It is finished."**

No. It can't be. No. Not now, not yet. Rescue him. Where are you, God?

But yes, it was finished.

He was dead - a criminal hanging on a gibbet.

A Jew on a gibbet!

Your Son and Mary's. Was it real? I am so, so sorry. **"Woman, this is your son."**





Scribes had gathered.

They'd got their headline and their sketch for 'tomorrow's scrolls'.

This could be international news one day. Sadly, they'd not got the whole story! Who would tell the real story?

"Woman, this is your son."

Should I have told them about Gabriel's promise;
the Magi's gift of gold as well as myrrh;
Simeon's prediction that Mary's Son would secure salvation for our people;
Your own affirmation of him in the Jordan and on Mount Tabor?
Should I have spoken out?

"Woman, this is your son."

Only part of the prophecies had been fulfilled in front of their eyes.
They didn't seem to know his prediction about rising in three days, or to understand the symbolism in the story of Jonah.
There was so much more, and they didn't know it!

"Woman, this is your son."

"You are right daughter, there was more. But he had done all I asked him to do.
I was preparing to call others to take on the ministry. I'm calling now!
There's no need to tell the Scribes of the guilty anything today. Let them have their say.
I want you to concentrate on what you learned from him and let it guide all your tomorrows.

When he said, **"Woman, this is your son."** He was not talking of himself.

He was speaking of John and all the faithful men and women who understood that there was more to tell, more to do and more to save. You are one of that number.

He was inviting you to join him in carrying on the work of saving the world.

Your work will begin on Sunday when, I assure you, he will rise and return to give you your commission. Be in the Upper Room with Mary and the others.

You saw blood mixed with water flow from his side. He was offering it to you as a symbol of life.

It is the wine of the New Covenant of which he spoke. It is Eucharist for humanity.

He will want you to feed it to my people.

You were right: There is more.

This is only the "in-between time".

It is through your giving that **He will save the world.**

*(Pause to reflective music possibly Liam Lawton's Heaven's Door and The Plains of Oak**, and let it continue quietly during the following prayers).*





LET US PRAY

Response: Merciful God, merciful and healing, comfort and strengthen them.

For all mothers who are forced to stand by helplessly while their children suffer unjustly. **R/**

For mothers who lovingly try to display strength to their children whose behaviour forces them to witness them caught up in circumstances that they would not choose for them. **R/**

For mothers who feel shattered by children who choose life styles that conflict with family and Gospel values. **R/**

For mothers whose children neglect, reject and betray them. **R/**

For mothers who struggle to protect the faith of both their children and their grandchildren. **R/**

For mothers who feel crushed by the loss of a child through death in any of its many painful forms. **R/**

For mothers who are suffering from terminal illness and worrying about their children. **R/**

For mothers who are suffering feelings of guilt because of an abortion. **R/**

For mothers who are pleading for forgiveness for having neglected or abused their children. **R/**

For 'mothers' who love and care for children who are orphaned, neglected or troubled. **R/**

For mothers who model their homes on Mary's and generate hope within the local faith community regardless of the pain they carry in their own hearts. **R/**

CONCLUDING PRAYER

God of mercy, love, forgiveness and hope; as daughters and sons of Mary, we stand before you now and ask you to give us new hearts and new spirits.

Fill our emptiness from the fullness of your life and love. Feed our souls and bodies with the bread and wine of Calvary. Fill our hearts with the hope and joy that only Wisdom can bring, so that, in the spirit of the first discipleship, we may assemble with Mary and joyfully sing new Alleluias tomorrow, as we greet the Risen Jesus in our own 'Upper Rooms'. **Amen.**

BLESSING

May the Creator who pardons all our yesterdays, protect us. **Amen**

May our Redeemer who sustains us during each of our to-days, bless ☩ us. **Amen**

May Wisdom strengthen us to welcome with joy, the gift of all our tomorrows. **Amen**



* From Liam Lawton's CD, **ancient ways future days**. Veritas, Dublin & GIA Publishing, Chicago, 1999.

** From Liam Lawton's CD, **Beyond Words**. Veritas, Dublin & GIA Publishing, Chicago, 2003

