

March 20, 2016

Holy Gospel of Jesus according to St. Luke 23:1-49



The whole council rose and brought Jesus to Pilate. They gave their accusation: "We found this man subverting our nation, opposing payment of taxes to Caesar, and claiming to be Christ the king." Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "You said so." Turning to the chief priests and the crowd, Pilate said, "I find no basis for a case against this man." But they insisted, "All the country of the Jews is being stirred up with his teaching. He began in Galilee and now he has come all the way here." When Pilate heard this, he asked if the man was a Galilean. Finding the accused to come under Herod's jurisdiction, Pilate sent Jesus over to Herod who happened to be in Jerusalem at that time. Herod was delighted to have Jesus before him now; for a long time he had wanted to see him because of the reports about him, and he was hoping to see Jesus work some miracle. He piled up question upon question, but got no reply from Jesus. All the while the chief priests and the scribes remained standing there, vehemently pressing their accusations. Finally, Herod ridiculed him and with his guards mocked him. And when he had put a rich cloak on him, he sent him back to Pilate. Pilate and Herod who were enemies before, became friends from that day. Pilate then called together the chief priests and the elders before all the people, and said to them, "You have brought this man before me and accused him of subversion. In your presence I have examined him and found no basis for your charges. And neither has Herod, for he sent him back to me. It is quite clear that this man has done nothing that deserves a death sentence. I will therefore have him scourged and then release him." (On the Passover Pilate had to release a prisoner.) Howling as one man, they protested: "No! Away with this man! Release Barabbas instead." This man had been thrown into prison for an uprising in the city and for murder. Since Pilate wanted to release Jesus, he appealed to the crowd once more, but they shouted back, "To the cross with him! To the cross!" A third time Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? Since no crime deserving death has been proved, I shall have him scourged and let him go." But they went on shouting and demanding that Jesus be crucified, and their shouts grew louder. So Pilate decided to pass the sentence they demanded. He released the man they asked for, the one who was in prison for rebellion and murder, and he delivered Jesus in accordance with their wishes. When they led Jesus away, they seized Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the fields, and laid the cross on him, to carry it behind Jesus. A large crowd of people followed him; among them were women beating their breast and wailing for him, but Jesus turned to them and said, "Women of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, weep rather for yourselves and for your children. For the days are coming when people will say: 'Happy are the women without child! Happy are those who have not given birth or nursed a child! And they will say to the mountains: Fall on us! And to the hills: Cover us!' For if this is the lot of the green wood, what will happen to the dry?" Along with Jesus, two criminals also were led out to be executed. There at the place called The Skull he was crucified together with the criminals - one on his right and another on his left. (Jesus said, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.") And the guards cast lots to divide his clothes among themselves. The people stood by watching. As for the rulers, they jeered at him, saying to one another, "Let the man who saved others now save himself, for he is the Messiah, the chosen one of God!" The soldiers also mocked him and when they drew near to offer him bitter wine, they said, "So you are the king of the Jews? Free yourself!" For above him was an inscription which read, "This is the King of the Jews." One of the criminals hanging with Jesus insulted him, "So you are the Messiah? Save yourself and us as well!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Have you no fear of God, you who received the same sentence as he did? For us it is just: this is payment for what we have done. But this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus replied, "Truly, you will be with me today in paradise." It was now about noon. The sun was hidden and darkness came over the whole land until mid-afternoon; and at that time the curtain of the Sanctuary was torn in two. Then Jesus gave a loud cry, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." And saying that, he gave up his spirit. The captain on seeing what had happened, acknowledged the hand of God. He said, "Surely this was an upright man." And all the people who had gathered to watch the spectacle, as soon as they saw what had happened went home beating their breasts. Only those who knew Jesus stood at a distance, especially the women who had followed him from Galilee; they witnessed all this.