

Taizé Prayer around the Cross – Good Friday

Taizé chant: **Stay here and keep watch with me**

INTRODUCTION:

Good evening and welcome to Taizé Prayer around the Cross on this **Good Friday** evening.

Since August 1940, when Brother Roger arrived in Taizé – a small place in north eastern France – and especially since 1949 when the first community of brothers began to welcome people from far and near – Taizé has been a meeting place for people from all Christian traditions and none.

Taizé has become a meeting place for young people from all over the world. It is truly a place of prayer, of pilgrimage and of hope. Prayer around the Cross is traditionally the form of prayer used at Eastertime in Taizé – especially Good Friday each year.

So this evening, we gather in**The Church of the Guardian Angels**..... To stay here and keep watch, and to pray for ourselves and for the people of our world as those gather in Taizé this evening also do.

We gather at the cross on which Jesus died for us and with the ones who stayed ,who stayed .. with those who heard Jesus say to his Father: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit’ – Veronica....John....the centurion....Mary his mother ...the ones who witnessed Jesus breathe his last....

Taizé chant: **Wait for the Lord**

NARRATOR:

Stay here and keep watch with me

‘.....with the ones who stayed – John, Mary, the Centurion and Veronica...’

Why did they stay and why do we stay

... watching ...waiting ...listening ...praying?;

VERONICA:

Veronica is my name. I took my shawl to wipe his face as he carried his cross, to cool his sweat-ridden brow. I stepped forward from among a group of my friends and bravely walked into the menacing crowd. I closed my eyes and ears to what was happening around me.

If I hadn't I wouldn't have had the courage to go towards him to reach up and wipe the blood from his face. Was it just my shawl wiping the blood or was it a touch which said 'I care....'

As soon as I looked at him I forgot all about the insults and jeers being shouted at me by the crowd. In that moment I remembered his words: 'Whatever you do to the least of my people, that you do for me.'

----- SILENCE -----

So why do you stay? Are you like me, willing to step out amid taunts and jeers to reach into another's pain, to be the one who goes against peer pressure to step out in love for another, to make a difference, to lighten another's burden, to ease their suffering, to say 'I care....'

Taizé chant: **Adoramus Te Domine**

JOHN:

John is my name. I was his friend for many years. We grew up together. My father was a fisherman; his was a carpenter. As I stood here today many memories came flooding back; the heart-to-heart conversations we shared, the laughter, the enjoyment, the living, the plans we made about how we would change the world, me with my ideas and dreams and he with his actions.

I wanted to shout at them: Stop beating my friend, stop mocking him, jeering him, wounding him.and then I remembered he once said: 'No one has greater love than to lay down ones life for ones friends.'PAUSE.....

So I stood beside him today just as we had stood together always when we were children, then teenagers and more recently adults. I gave him friendship to the end and he gave me the courage to stay.

----- SILENCE -----

But why do you stay? We all need friends but how much do we value them.

We all need companions who share the ups and downs of life with us, who are always there for us no matter what, friends who challenge us to grow, to become who we are gifted to be and yet accept us and love us just as we are.PAUSEBut how often do we say thank you for

the gift of friendship, the gift of love?

Taizé chant: **The Lord is my life**

CENTURION:

I am the centurion. I am here tonight because I have to be. It is my job - a job I will fulfill, as always after every crucifixion. I stand here slightly away from the small group that remains, watching them watching me, looking at the cross, and wondering why?

What am I missing here? I've seen dozens of people crucified – that's my job – but I can't help wondering today what is different about this man. I didn't really know him, only heard about this Jesus of Nazareth. He was a good man if what people say was true – a teacher, a healer, a friend to all.

Something stirred within me when they brought him here today – questions came to my mind. What did he do to deserve this cruel death? I was troubled by what I saw, yet I was only here out of duty in the beginning, but now even when my shift is over, I want to stay here – to be here to the end.

Remember my words as I stood watching this afternoon, 'Truly, this man is the Son of God?' I really mean those words now. Before I was just a bystander doing my duty.

----- SILENCE -----

NARRATOR:

But you, why are you still here? Is it out of duty? Is it because you feel you ought to be here, that it is the right thing to do, or because your friends are here, or because others might comment if you hadn't come?.....PAUSE.....or are you here tonight because you are committed – because you too believe that 'Truly, this man is the Son of God'.

Taizé chant: **Ubi Caritas**

MARY:

I am Mary, his mother. I once responded to a call from God. I prayed, 'Behold the handmade of the Lord'.

That day it was a big risk to say 'yes' to God because I didn't know where it would lead me. Yet here I am today a day on which words just wouldn't come.

I could only stand and watch. My heart was heavy. My spirit was sad. I couldn't even cry much of the time even though I wanted toPAUSE.....

As he was taken down from the cross I held him for one last time and then he was taken away from me. I took one last look at him and remembered his words: 'Neither death nor life can take you away from me'.

I am his mother, the mother of Jesus, the Son of God.

----- SILENCE -----

NARRATOR:

But why do you stay? Are you staying beside a friend in his dying moments, comforting those who mourn the loss of a loved one? We all know what it is like to sit with those in pain – sharing their suffering and their loss. We know what it is like to be with them just as we are here tonight, out of love.

Mary, Veronica, John, and the Centurion – we are united in our own sorrow, in our pain, in our anger, In our hurt. We ask Jesus to remember us as he promised to remember the Good Thief who was crucified beside him and to be with us in our remembering.

Taizé chant: **Jesus remember me**

----- SILENCE -----

READER: 1

He was not crucified alone, and he is not crucified alone now.

We are all part of Jesus.

He has no body now but yours and mine.

He still suffers today in his people, and he suffers in you and me.

He was not crucified alone and he is not crucified alone now.

Are you ill? He suffers in your illness.

Are you lonely? He suffers in your loneliness.

Are you homeless? He suffers in your homeliness.

Have you been neglected? He suffers in your neglect.

Have you been abused? He suffers in your abuse.

Have you been despairing? He suffers in your despair.

Have you been bullied? He suffers with you.

He has no body now on earth but yours.

He was consoled by the look of Mary – his mother,
by the quiet presence of John - his friend,
by the touch of Veronica – his consoler,
by the helping hand of Simon, who carried his cross for some
of the way to Calvary,
and by the Centurion who stayed with him till the end – even
when his shift was up.

You are the Body of Christ and you are Mary, John, Simon, Veronica,
the centurion – his helpers on the way of the cross – the ones who stayed.

Jesus was not crucified alone, and he is not crucified alone now.

----- Prayers of Adoration -----

READER: 2

O Jesus, as you carried your cross, your life was not spectacular – help us to walk along that road with you.

O Jesus, when you were wounded, you did not make threats – show us how to forgive and show love to the very end.

O Jesus, you see our sufferings and failures – be with us in our moments of pain as we are with you in yours, this evening.

----- SILENCE -----

----- Prayers of Intercession -----

READER: 2

The response to the prayers will be sung

**“O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer,
when I call, answer me.**

**O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer,
come and listen to me.”**

For all the people of the world – especially those who are suffering, in pain or in trouble at this time.

O Lord.....

For those who are far from home – immigrants and exiles.

For prisoners and victims of oppression.

For all those living in countries that are at war.

O Lord.....

For those who are working for peace in our world

For all Christians and for those who follow Jesus today.

O Lord.....

For children and young people who are suffering anywhere in the world.

For ourselves gathered here and for the deepest needs of our hearts this evening – spoken and unspoken.

O Lord.....

----- * **PRAYER AROUND THE CROSS** * -----

NARRATOR:

One of the traditions in Taizé is that those present are invited to come forward to touch or to lay their hands on the cross, bringing with them whatever is echoing in their hearts.

We now invite you to do the same, – to bring your own pain and the pain and suffering and trouble in our world this evening. **We invite you to leave where you are sitting, and come forward and pray at the cross.**

In coming forward we acknowledge our desire to stay here – to be with Jesus in whom love begins.

(Lead congregation to pray at Cross)

Taizé chant: **Veni Sancte Spiritus**

Taizé chant: **Bless the Lord my soul**

NARRATOR:

As we stay here together, we acknowledge our unity as one family and bring our evening to a close, with the prayer Jesus taught us – our prayer of petition, our prayer of forgiveness, our prayer of thanksgiving. **Our Father , who art**

Jesus, we know that your story didn't end on Good Friday. You were raised up by God to new life and God offers us too the promise of resurrection. Your 'failure' was turned into victory on Easter morning. *'Jesus is not here,'* your messenger said, *'he has been raised from the dead'.*

As your followers, on Good Friday night, we know that rejection, loss and even death don't necessarily mean failure. With your help we can move through these experiences towards new life and resurrection. We can be turned around as you were.

Give us the courage to accept the reality that life will always have its bright sides and its dark sides, its joys and its sorrows. And help us believe that God has good things in store for us too.

Let us pray,
Almighty Father,
give us the grace to unite ourselves in faith with Jesus
who underwent death and lay buried in the tomb
that we too may rise again in newness of life with him.

Amen.

We invite you to stay, to remain here in prayer around the cross.....

Taize chant: **Stay here and keep watch with me**