

SUNDERLAND ART GALLERY

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THE
GOD
WHO
SPEAKS

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

SUNDERLAND ART GALLERY



THE
GOD
WHO
SPEAKS

THROUGH
ART

Using pictures to help us pray with the Word of God

WHERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM by PHILIP MORRIS RA



Read:

This is a remarkable picture of the scene after the greatest event in human history.

Jesus' body has been taken away for burial. The thieves too have been removed and probably thrown into a common grave. The crosses are being dismantled in time for the Passover feast. NO tracer of the momentous sacrifice of the Son of God will remain.

The little group of children playing obviously have no notion of what the crucifixion was and even the man folding the title of Christ King of the Jews is probably oblivious of the import of his actions. He is just doing another job.

Life is going on around him.

It is a scene of heedlessness.

Reflect:

How often we miss the significance of an event. There are some things too great for us to take in.

If we had been present at the Crucifixion, would we have lingered to ponder and savour the meaning, to share it with others, or would we have gone away quickly, eager to forget the horror and leave the aftermath to those who had no conception of the importance of the event?

Life is short and can be callous. Why dwell on the distasteful? This scene is so typical of human nature: people gather when there is a tragedy or accident to stare and perhaps take pictures, and then disperse and get on with their lives. Am I any better?

Respond:

Repeat the poignant words of the negro spiritual: it is a plea for understanding

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree? .

Were you there when they pierced him in the side?

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Were you there when he rose from out the tomb?

If we missed the suffering, will we miss the glory too?

Rest:

Let your eyes dwell on a crucifix. Stay there and enter as far as possible into the love and self-giving of Jesus. Make yourself stay there.

Return:

Practise being mindful of everything we do today. An experience not reflected on is wasted.

THE LAMENTATION OF CHRIST



Read:

Gaze on this utterly sad and loving scene and contrast it with the previous picture. Here, Christ's death is being lamented by those closest to him – his mother Mary who cradles his head on her knee, St John who had stood at the foot of the cross, faithful to the end. He was the beloved disciple who had laid his head on the breast of Jesus just the night before at the Last Supper. It would be nice to think that the figure in blue is Peter who had denied Jesus and fled, and now returns to prepare him for burial, but it is more likely to be Joseph of Arimathea who gave his own tomb for Jesus' burial. All the women behind, from Mary Magdalen on the left, are grieving and sorrowful. They had followed Jesus courageously to the end and now wanted to anoint his body for burial.

This is a portrayal of love and fidelity. The cross stands as a sign of victory and salvation with the inscription in Greek IC XC (Jesus Christ) and the crown of thorns and spear and sponge – all symbols of suffering. Even the workman is interested in this unusual death.

Reflect:

Am I here among his nearest and dearest, or have I walked away to get on with my life?

When a loved person dies, we need time to grieve and lament and do the best we can. Jesus' death happened so quickly – they were all in shock but they wanted to be there and stay there. Think of our own bereavements. We all cope in different ways and some wounds never heal. Try to come to terms with the sorrows you have experienced. Mary, John and the others buried Jesus with reverence and dignity and then withdrew, only to be rewarded with the joy and glory of the Resurrection when all their tears were wiped away.

Respond in prayer:

Pray to Mary Mother of Sorrows for all those who have lost loved ones and are grieving.

Pray for a renewal of our faith in the Resurrection. Our loved ones are now with God where we will join them some day. Thank God for this hope and assurance.

Rest:

Repeat quietly and several times until all your anxieties cease:

Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

Return:

There is great healing in routine. Thank God for the graces of everyday, and the ways in which he meets you in the ordinary events of each day, and the people we take for granted.