

The King of the Jews, Christ of God, is executed

Sequence D3: Luke 23,26-56

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This sequence is formed of seven passages concentrically arranged.

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1. JESUS IS TAKEN TO THE PLACE OF EXECUTION (23,26-32)

COMPOSITION

- + ²⁶ And as they lead-him-off,
 . having-taken a certain **Simon** of Cyrene coming from the-field,
 + they-set-on him the cross
 . to-carry (it) behind **Jesus**.

<p>- ²⁷ Following him (there-was) a great number of people - and women who were-beating (their chests) and lamenting him. .. ²⁸ Having turned to them, .. Jesus said:</p>
<p>+ «Daughters of Jerusalem, (do) not cry for ME, – but for <i>YOURSELVES</i> cry and for <i>YOUR CHILDREN</i>, : ²⁹ because, behold!, come days : in which they will <i>say</i>: . Happy the barren . and the wombs which (did) not give-birth . and the breasts which (did) not feed ----- : ³⁰ Then they-will-begin «<i>to-say</i> . to the hills: fall on us! . and to the mountains: Cover us!» + ³¹ because if to THE GREEN TREE these they-do, – to the <i>DRY</i> what might-happen?»</p>

- + ³² They were-leading also **two-others** evildoers,
 . to-be-executed with him.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Hos 9–10

Verse 30 takes up Hos 10,8 and verse 29 might recall Hos 9,14. Hosea is denouncing Israel's acts of infidelity and announcing its devastation and the dispersion of the exile.

Isa 53,12

As he had proclaimed in 22,37 («This Scripture must be fulfilled in me: “And he was counted among the lawless”»); see p. *Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.*), Jesus is numbered among the criminals (the «evildoers» in 23,32).

INTERPRETATION

«He was numbered among the criminals»

Jesus is not led alone to the place of torment. He is only one of the three condemned men going to be crucified (32). The prophecy of the suffering Servant is thus fulfilled: «He was numbered among the criminals» (Isa 53,12). He, the just one *par excellence*, is going so far as to be likened to an evildoer. But in the procession that is leading him to death, Jesus is not the only just person; he is accompanied by Simon of Cyrene carrying the cross behind him (26cd). Simon is hence the figure of the disciple of whom Jesus had said: «He who does not carry his cross and does not come after me cannot be my disciple» (14,27). The disciple himself (26) is thus called upon to be treated like an evildoer, just as his master was treated like an evildoer (32). That is how the martyrs will be treated in the course of the ages

Jesus, the figure of Jerusalem

The disciples will not be the only ones to undergo the same treatment as Jesus. What Jesus prophesies to the women who follow him sorrowfully, what he announces to all the people (27-31) is a Passion like his own. Days will come when in Jerusalem everyone will wish to die and be buried by the mountains and the hills (30), when mothers will envy barren women, the ones who have no children to weep over, when, like Job, everyone would wish never to have seen the light of day (29). What the city will undergo will be still worse than what Jesus is suffering. The fire of anger will devour the dry wood (31) of those who have been unfaithful to the voice of their Lord. Jesus' imminent end is a prefiguration of the overwhelming event soon to come upon the people,

2. CRUCIFIED, JESUS PRAYS TO HIS FATHER (23,33-34)

COMPOSITION

: ³³ And when they-came	to the place called Skull,
: there they-crucified	him and the evildoers
: one to the right,	the other to the left.

: ³⁴ Jesus was-saying:	
: «FATHER, FORGIVE THEM;	
: FOR THEY-KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO.»	

: Dividing, therefore,	the clothes of-him,
: They-cast	lots.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

- The end of verse 34 quotes Ps 22,19: «They share my clothes among them, they cast lots over my garment.»
- The crucifixion (33b) recalls verse 17 of the same psalm: «They bind my hands and my feet».

INTERPRETATION

The forgiveness of the Son and the Father

Stark naked (34d), Jesus is crucified (33b), feet and fists bound to the wood of the cross. Between two nameless evildoers (33b), while the soldiers cast lots over his clothes (34e). When the frightful torment starts, which is to lead him to death in atrocious suffering and the most degrading humiliation, he thinks of only one thing, the salvation of mankind. Not about his friends, because he has practically none any more, but about those very people who have brought him to this, the authorities in Israel and all the people who cried aloud for his crucifixion, the Romans who condemned him and have just carried out the sentence. Certainly also about those who abandoned him the day before in Gethsemane, about the one who denied him three times in that cowardly way during the night. In the prayer he sends up to his «Father» (34), he recognizes himself as the Son of him whose will it is not to let sinners perish but to save them (Ezek 18,23) and who for that reason did not hesitate to give up his only Son (Rom 8,32).

3. JEWS AND ROMANS IN FRONT OF JESUS (23,35-37)

COMPOSITION

+ ³⁵ And stood-by + and they-were-mocking	THE PEOPLE also THE CHIEFS	watching, <i>saying:</i>
– «Others he-saved,	: if this is	<i>LET-HE-SAVE HIMSELF,</i> THE CHRIST OF GOD,
		THE CHOSEN (ONE)!»

+ ³⁶ They-mocked him + Bringing to-him	also THE SOLDIERS, sour-wine	approaching, ³⁷ and <i>saying:</i>
–	: «If you are	THE KING OF-THE JEWS, <i>SAVE YOURSELF!»</i>

INTERPRETATION

Raillery and silence

Jesus' torment is doubled by the laughter of those who had him condemned (35) and of those who were charged to carry out the sentence (36-37). On the one hand the chiefs of the people are mocking him, on the other, there are the Roman soldiers who make game of him and through him of the people of whom Jesus is the laughable king. The people, on the other hand, do not join their voices to those of their chiefs (35a). The fact that the one who saved so many of them (35c) does not save himself does not make them laugh. It really looks as if they do not understand what is going on any more than the others. And yet it was indeed this same people who only the day before came in large numbers to the Temple to hear him and remained hung on his lips (19,48; 21,38). Today they are still there but can only «look on» without saying anything (35a), but not without thinking about everything of which they had been witnesses. They now had to be witnesses also of what was going on now before their eyes.

The saviour

The raillery of the Jewish leaders (35), echoed by that of the pagan soldiers (37), is the main thing here: it is aimed at the heart of what Jesus did and what he is. Even in their mockery the leaders recognize that the crucified one was a saviour (35c). As if all Jesus' activity for them were summarized at that moment in one single word. The one whose condemnation to death they obtained with difficulty is the one who had passed among them doing good, the one who had saved so many of them from sickness, from the devil and from death (Acts 10,38). They laugh at seeing Jesus deprived of the salvation he brought to others,

not even realizing that, if that is how things are, it is because they themselves have refused to be saved.

The chosen one

Through the mockery of the Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers, the real reason for the condemnation and suffering of Jesus is manifested. It is because he recognized he was «chosen» by God (35e), anointed by him (35d) to be king of the Jews (37b), that he is now raised up on the throne of the cross. What is a scandal for the Jews and folly for the pagans is wisdom in God's eyes (1Cor 1,23).

4. THE TWO BANDITS ON EITHER SIDE OF JESUS (23,39-43)

COMPOSITION

+ ³⁹ One of the hanged evil-doers	was-insulting him	<i>saying:</i>
: «Are you not	THE CHRIST?	
	. <i>SAVE YOURSELF</i>	and us!»
+ ⁴⁰ Having-answered, the other	rebuking him	<i>said:</i>
: «(do) not you fear God,		
	. because in the same judgment you are?	

- ⁴¹ We	indeed justly	
. comparable	for what <i>we did</i> ,	we receive;
- this-one , though		
. <i>he-did</i>	nothing	out-of-place.»

+ ⁴² And he-was-saying:			
: « <i>JESUS</i> ,	<i>REMEMBER</i>	of-me,	
	. when you might-come into your	KINDGOM. »	
+ ⁴³ And he-said to-him:			
: «Amen, I-say to-you: today	with	me,	
	. you will-be	in	paradise. »

INTERPRETATION

The ultimate division

Right to the end Jesus is the sign of contradiction prophesied by Simeon (Luke 2,34). The two evildoers, one crucified on his right, the other on his left, call to mind all those who have had to take sides for or against Jesus in his lifetime, some mocking him and rejecting him, others in faith begging for the salvation which no one save him could bring them. In this way they symbol-

lically represent those who will look towards the crucified one; they too will have to choose between prayer (42) and insults (39), especially when, like Jesus, they will be crucified, cast into the crucible of suffering and subjected to the trial of death.

The confession

The two evildoers likewise ask for salvation (39c.42b); they have no other wish, in the situation they find themselves in, than to be freed from their torments. But the first knows very well that he is condemned and that nothing can be done about it; he speaks ironically about his companion in misfortune (39), as if his insults could relieve him. The other prefers the truth, about himself and the others (41); faith leads him to confess his sin and the justice of the punishment (41a) and at the same time the innocence and justice of Jesus (41b). Despite appearances, he recognizes in the persecuted righteous person the one whom the prophets had announced, the suffering servant to whom the multitudes will be assigned, Christ the king (42c). His prayer is immediately heard, his sins forgiven (43). And the first to enter with Jesus into the kingdom of God will be a criminal who on his own admission had rightly deserved his condemnation (41a), a model for all who would be tempted to think that their situation is irremediably hopeless. The love of God is stronger than death.

«Jesus!»

The good thief is the only person in the whole of Luke's Gospel — and even in the four gospels — to address the Lord using only his name, «Jesus» (42b), without adding anything else. He does not call him «Jesus of Nazareth» like the demons at Capernaum (4,34), nor «Jesus, Son of God» like the demoniac at Gerasa (8,28), nor «Jesus, master» (*epistata*) like the ten lepers (17,13), nor «Jesus, son of David» like the blind man at Jericho (18,38). He simply says: «Jesus!» How is that fact to be interpreted? There is certainly nothing against seeing in it the manifestation of complete faith, and even of very great intimacy. The «good thief» is of course a criminal and he would have been condemned for serious reasons; and for that matter he himself admits to being guilty (41). But at this moment, when professing Jesus' innocence (41b), he is the one closest to him in accepting suffering and death. He alone is truly «with him». Hence he will be able to enter «this very day with him into paradise» (43). The name of «Jesus» means «saviour»; it is his most beautiful title; the good thief does not need to invoke any other. By beseeching his saviour he is sure to obtain his salvation.

5. DYING, JESUS PRAYS TO HIS FATHER (23,44-46)

COMPOSITION

: ⁴⁴ And it was already	the sixth hour			
	- and	darkness	came on the whole earth	
: until		the ninth hour,		
	- the	sun	stopped.	

⁴⁵ The veil of the sanctuary was-split (in the) middle.				

: ⁴⁶ And having-cried out in a loud voice,	Jesus	said:		
	- «Father, into your hands I entrust	my <i>spirit</i> .»		
: And this		having-said,		
	-	he	<i>breathed-out.</i>	

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Gen 1–2

Verse 44 is the reverse of Gen 1,2-5; God's first creation was light, to scatter the darkness covering the abyss and to establish the principle governing time. Moreover, the «breath» entrusted to the hands of the Father (46) recalls that it is God who at the beginning had placed his breath in the nostrils of the first man (Gen 2,7).

Amos 8,9-10

The day of judgement will be marked by darkness at midday, because festivities will change into lamentation, «as in mourning for an only son»¹.

Ps 31,6

Jesus' prayer (46b) quotes verse 6 of Psalm 31.

INTERPRETATION

The end of creation

With Jesus departing, the light of the world disappears (44b) and darkness again extends its reign over the earth (44b). By separating darkness from light at the beginning, God had established the principle of time by the succession of the days and nights. Their being confused, the disappearance of light and the return to original darkness signify the undoing of creation at its very beginning and

¹ See *Amos*, 330.332.

mark the end of history as well as eschatological judgement. Then the breath placed by God in the nostrils of the first man to make him a living being returns to God whence it came (46). What is true of the death of every man takes on, with the death of Jesus, a dramatic dimension out of the ordinary, because thereby it is the only Son who returns to the bosom of the «Father» (46b).

The end of the Temple

The veil of the Temple is rent down the middle (45) when Jesus is going to give up his spirit (46). The passive indicates that it is God himself who is acting. He is thereby abolishing a separation, the one that distinguishes the sanctuary from anything outside it or the separation that isolates the Holy of Holies from the rest of the sanctuary. Being without doubt the first fruits of the destruction of the Temple, the death of Jesus puts an end to a system and inaugurates a new order in man's relations with God. The central position of this account attracts attention, but does not explain what is still somewhat enigmatic. It will be necessary therefore to come back to it later on.

6. JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB (23,47-56)

COMPOSITION

+ ⁴⁷ The centurion <small>HAVING-SEEN</small> <i>what had-happened</i> ,	
+ he glorified God saying:	«Truly, this <i>man</i> was <i>just!</i> »

: ⁴⁸ And all the gathered crowds for the <small>SPECTACLE, HAVING-SEEN</small> <i>what just-happened</i> ,	
: beating their chests	<small>THEY-WERE-RETURNING.</small>

+ ⁴⁹ Stood there all his acquaintances, at a-distance	
+ and <i>the women, the-ones following him from Galilee</i> ,	<small>SEEING</small> these (things).

⁵⁰ And, behold, <i>a man</i> named Joseph,	being a councilor, a good man and <i>just</i> ,
— ⁵¹ this-one was not agreeing	(neither) with their plan (nor) deeds —
of Arimathea, a city of-the Jews,	who <small>AWAITED</small> THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

⁵² This-one, having-gone to Pilate,	he <small>ASKED-FOR</small> THE BODY OF JESUS.
⁵³ And having-taken-down,	he wrapped it in linen
and placed him in a tomb (hewn-out-of-rock) where no-one was yet lying.	

- ⁵⁴ (This) was the Preparation day	and the sabbath was dawning.

:: ⁵⁵ <i>The women followed-after</i> , the-ones who were accompanying him <i>from Galilee</i> ,	
: <small>THEY OBSERVED</small> the tomb	as was-placed his BODY.
:: ⁵⁶ <small>HAVING-RETURNED</small> ,	they prepared aromatic-oils and perfumes

- And on-the sabbath they indeed were-resting	according-to the commandment.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The expectation of Israel

Joseph of Arimathea is described as a «just and good man [...] who awaited the kingdom of God» (51); these expressions recall those in the presentation of Jesus in the Temple: Simeon «a just and pious man [...] he was waiting for the consolation of Israel» and Anna spoke of the child Jesus to all who «were awaiting the deliverance of Jerusalem» (Luke 2,25 and 38).

Jesus the king

The expression «in which no one had ever been laid» (53b) recalls the one in Luke 19, 30: Jesus mounts a donkey «on which no one had ever mounted». As in the case of the royal mount, it was necessary that the king's tomb should not have been used by anyone else. The second piece of the central part thus ends (53b) with an allusion to the kingship of Jesus just as the first piece ended with the mention of the kingdom of God (51b).

Looking on

All the verbs of seeing in the first part (Luke 23,47-49) echo Zech 12,10 («They will look on the one they have pierced») and likewise Isa 52-53 (52,15; 53,2.10.11).

The completion of creation

The passage, and therefore the whole sequence, ends with the sabbath rest, as does the account of creation (Gen 2,1). The fact that in the preceding passage reference is made to the same story in Genesis reinforces the probability of such an allusion (see p. 9).

INTERPRETATION

The new creation is completed

Jesus' work is done. Everything is consummated. The Sabbath day comes (54) when he will rest from all he has done. Just as the Lord God had rested on the seventh day when he had completed all his work. What happened on that sixth day is the accomplishment of a new genesis. As at the beginning, death is present, but whereas it had been promised to Adam as a punishment for his disobedience, today it was inflicted on the one whose righteousness all recognized (47-48). The death of the Righteous One reveals to men their sin and paradoxically calls forth the praise of God (47b); what happened is for his glory and the dead body of Jesus shows that the kingdom of God has come (51b-52).

The fulfilment of the expectation of Israel

Joseph of Arimathea, like Simeon and Anna (Luke 2,25 and 38), like all the righteous people in Israel, were awaiting the kingdom of God (51b). What he is going to ask Pilate for and what he receives in his arms is the dead body of Jesus (52). But that body is a king's body, since it is laid in a tomb in which no one has ever been laid (53b); the king must indeed be the first in everything, even in death. It was also necessary that a member of the Council (50), a representative of the supreme authority of the people, should perform the royal burial. It is a dead king that is being offered to Israel, a king who must be placed in the tomb quickly before nightfall. That is where the hopes of the people of the promise finish up.

All have seen it

Jesus has just breathed his last (46). That is what happened (47a). That is what everyone saw. The Roman centurion, the pagan, who is the first to give praise to God (47b), all the crowds of Jews that represent Israel (48a), his acquaintances (49a) and lastly the women disciples (49b). All mankind, those among the people who believed and those who rejected the Messiah, all peoples, finally, with the Roman officer, they all had to be there and be eyewitnesses to the great event that had just taken place. But whereas the centurion recognized the righteousness of the man being executed (47b), the Jewish crowds go further and confess their sin by beating their breasts (48b).

7. THE KING OF THE JEWS, CHRIST OF GOD, IS PUT TO DEATH (23,26-56)

COMPOSITION OF THE SEQUENCE

²⁶ And as they led him away, they seized one *Simon of Cyrene*, who was coming in from the fields, and **laid on him** the cross, to carry it behind Jesus.

²⁷ And there **FOLLOWED HIM** *A GREAT MULTITUDE OF THE PEOPLE*, and of *WOMEN* who *WERE BEATING (THEIR CHESTS)* and lamenting him. ²⁸ But Jesus turning to them said, «Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!' ³⁰ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' ³¹ For if they do this when *THE WOOD IS GREEN*, what will happen when it is dry?»

³² Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be executed with him.

³³ And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. ³⁴ And Jesus said, «**FATHER**, forgive them; for they know not what they do.» And they cast lots to divide his garments.

³⁵ And the people stood by, watching; but the rulers **SCOFFED AT HIM**, saying, «He saved others; *let him save himself*, if he is **THE CHRIST OF GOD**, his Chosen One!» ³⁶ The soldiers also **MOCKED HIM**, coming up and offering him vinegar, ³⁷ and saying, «If you are **THE KING OF THE JEWS**, *save yourself!*»

³⁸ There was also
an inscription
over him

«**THIS (IS) THE KING OF THE JEWS.**»

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged **INSULTED HIM**, saying, «Are you not **THE CHRIST? Save yourself and us!**» ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, «Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed **JUSTLY**; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.» ⁴² And he said, «Jesus, *remember me* when you come into **YOUR KINGDOM.**» ⁴³ And he said to him, «Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.»

⁴⁴ It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵ while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, «**FATHER**, into thy hands I commit my spirit!»
And having said this he breathed his last.

⁴⁷ Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, and said, «Certainly this man was **JUST!**» ⁴⁸ And *ALL THE MULTITUDES* who assembled to see the sight, when they saw what had taken place, returned home *BEATING THEIR BREASTS*. ⁴⁹ And all his acquaintances and *THE WOMEN* who had **FOLLOWED HIM** from Galilee stood at a distance and saw these things.

⁵⁰ Now there was a man named Joseph, who was a member of the council, a good and **JUST** man, ⁵¹ who had not consented to their purpose and deed, from the Jewish town of *Arimathea*, and he was awaiting **THE KINGDOM OF GOD**. ⁵² This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³ Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud, and **laid him** in a rock-hewn tomb, where no one had ever yet been laid.

⁵⁴ It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. ⁵⁵ The *WOMEN* who had come with him from Galilee **FOLLOWED**, and saw the tomb, and how his body **was laid**; ⁵⁶ then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The references to the Old Testament are very many, both in the form of direct quotations as well as of more or less significant allusions.

Psalms of supplication

- Ps 22, where the same mockery and insults are to be found (Ps 22,8.9) and dividing up clothing (Ps 22,19) as in Luke 23,34; where words are also heard which resemble the mockery addressed to Jesus by the chiefs, the soldiers and the first evildoer: «Let him entrust himself to the Lord! Let him free him! Let him deliver him, since he is his friend!» (Ps 22,9); the contacts do not end there, because the psalm ends with the conversion of the pagans: «All the earth will remember and come back to the Lord, all the families of the nations will bow down before him» (Ps 22,28); the centurion's profession of faith at the start of the last passage in the sequence announces the same conversion of the pagans. The next verse of the psalm, «To the Lord royalty, to the master of the nations!» (Ps 22,29) foreshadows the title of king that is given to Jesus.
- Ps 69,22 with the vinegar similar to that given to Jesus (Luke 23,36). The rest of the psalm (Ps 69,23-29) calls down the curse on enemies; on the contrary, Jesus asks his Father to pardon his enemies (Luke 23,34).
- Ps 38,12 with the friends who look on from a distance as in Luke 23,49.
- Ps 31,6 where Jesus' last words come, as in Luke 23,46.

The prophets

- Ezek 21,3-8, in which the green tree and the withered tree (3) designate the just man and the sinner (8) as in Luke 23,31.
- Hos 10,8 is quoted in Luke 23,30.
- Isa 53,12: The choice of the term «evildoers» in Luke 23,32 refers to the fourth song of the Servant.
- Amos 8,9-10 is taken up in Luke 23,44 with the same darkness in broad daylight, followed by the death of the only son².

The Law

The references to the first two chapters of Genesis have already been highlighted above (p. 342; p. 348); to them must be added «paradise» (Luke 23,43) to which the evildoer is admitted while Adam had been cast out from it.

The darkness preceding the death of the son recalls the last two of the ten plagues of Egypt (Exod 10,21-29 for the darkness; Exod 11,1-10 for the death of the first-born).

² See P. BOVATI – R. MEYNET, *Le Livre du prophète Amos*, 330-334.

INTERPRETATION

The king of the Jews dies

«This is the king of the Jews.» These are the words which all can read above the dying crucified man (23,38). All ascribe the title of king to him, either in derision, as in the case of the Jewish leaders (35), the Roman troops (37) and the evildoer crucified on his left (39), or out of conviction, as in the case of the evildoer crucified on his right (42) and like Joseph of Arimathea who gives a royal burial to the one he was waiting for (53). It is as a king that he is recognized by some, but rejected by the others. Like any king, Jesus represents his people. The destiny of the body is that of its head. The death of the king is the death of the kingdom. Jesus going to his torment announces that of his city (28-31), when its inhabitants reach the stage of wishing they had never seen the light of day (29), when they wish to be covered by the hills and the mountains (30). When Jerusalem is attacked and surrounded, its king will no longer be with it to defend it, neither Jesus nor the king of heaven whom he represents. Then the chosen people will follow its king in the passion (31) and there will be the kingdom of the pagans (Luke 21,24).

The only son dies

Jesus twice calls God his Father. To commit into his hands the breath he has from him as his son (46). To commit into his hands the forgiveness of those who bound together to lead him to death (34). It is God who must forgive what mankind does to Jesus for it is he who is affected by the offence, just as any father is offended by the harm done to his son. When man asks God for forgiveness for sins he has committed against his neighbour it is because through his brother he has sinned against their common Father. As a true son, Jesus has placed everything in his Father's hands; in return, the Father has given him all power as to his first-born son. When the evildoer crucified on his right asks Jesus to remember him (42), it is because he considers him to possess the power to forgive his sins. Jesus, who promises to receive him with him into paradise (43), is doing the works of his Father who alone has the power to forgive. Jesus is the Son of God, but he dies. With him, Israel, the only people chosen by God from all others, is also to be faced with death (29) and, thanks to the death of the one whom God had chosen from among the chosen people (38), all nations will enter into the Lord's adoption (47).

«...so that the thoughts of many hearts may be uncovered» (Luke 2,35)

Jews and pagans have come together to condemn Jesus and to lead him to death. All are present, the chosen people with their leaders (35), the foreign soldiers (36) with their centurion (47). Both deride him and his kingship (35-37).

All see the sun disappear and the condemned man expire (44-46). The centurion then gives glory to God for the righteousness of Jesus (47) and the Jewish crowds acknowledge their fault (48). All recognize their injustice in face of the innocence of Jesus. With his death the wall of separation dividing them falls. From now on division no longer stands between Jews and pagans, but between those who side with Jesus and those who reject him. The separation cuts across each group, evildoers, military people, Romans, Jews, disciples. The first evildoer allies himself with the mockers (39) and the other one with those who pray to him (40-43). The Roman soldiers make fun of him (36-37) but the centurion gives glory to God (47). The Jewish leaders also mock (35) but not Joseph of Arimathea, the member of the Council who had not been associated either with their scheme or with their action (50-51). The disciples are also divided, the women who had followed him from Galilee and accompany him to the end (55-56) and the men who abandoned him and do not appear, even in the distance. Naked as was Adam before the fall, Jesus finds again his domination over the universe, the domination that the creator had given to the father of all mankind.

The unveiling

Jesus is stripped of his clothing, the veil of the temple is torn. Jesus is naked on the cross, as is Adam before the sin; along with his body, his humanity is offered to the sight of all, in all its innocence, but also in the extremity of its suffering, its humiliation, derision, death at the end. His garments, left as an inheritance to the Roman soldiers who represent the pagans, will serve to hide their shameful nakedness; they will cover their sin. And the good thief, also naked, strips Jesus of all the titles he had so far been endowed with, thus revealing him to all as «Saviour». As for the torn veil of the temple, it now shows the true face of God; it unveils, it lays bare the divinity of him whom Jesus invokes as his «Father». All, and no longer just the priests nor the sons of Israel, receive the revelation of the mercy of that God who, by handing over his Son, forgives their sins.

The Scriptures are accomplished

It was written that the Christ would suffer and be put to death. That is how the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms spoke. Jesus fulfils the Scriptures to the letter. In him, what is written is accomplished, down to the last detail; he is offered vinegar as was the persecuted psalmist (36), lots are cast for his garments (34) and he is mocked, smitten, placed among evildoers as the prophet Isaiah was. Jesus accomplishes the Scriptures, going back to their very origins. What happens through him is a new genesis: like the Lord, he rests on the seventh day from everything he did during his life (54-56); the man who admits his sin, thanks to him, finds the way to paradise (41-43).

Salvation is restored

Even in their mockery the leaders recognize that Jesus saved others (35). The soldiers echo the same call to save himself (36-37). In his insults, the first evildoer asks him to save him as well as saving himself (39). Jesus would never deserve his name as Saviour as well as when he answers the prayer of the second evildoer; when giving his own life (46), he saves that of the sinner (43). To him as to all those following his example he again opens the door of paradise from which the first man had been cast out. Through Adam sin had entered into the world and with sin death; with Jesus, who takes death on himself along with the sin of mankind, salvation is offered to us again (Rom 5).