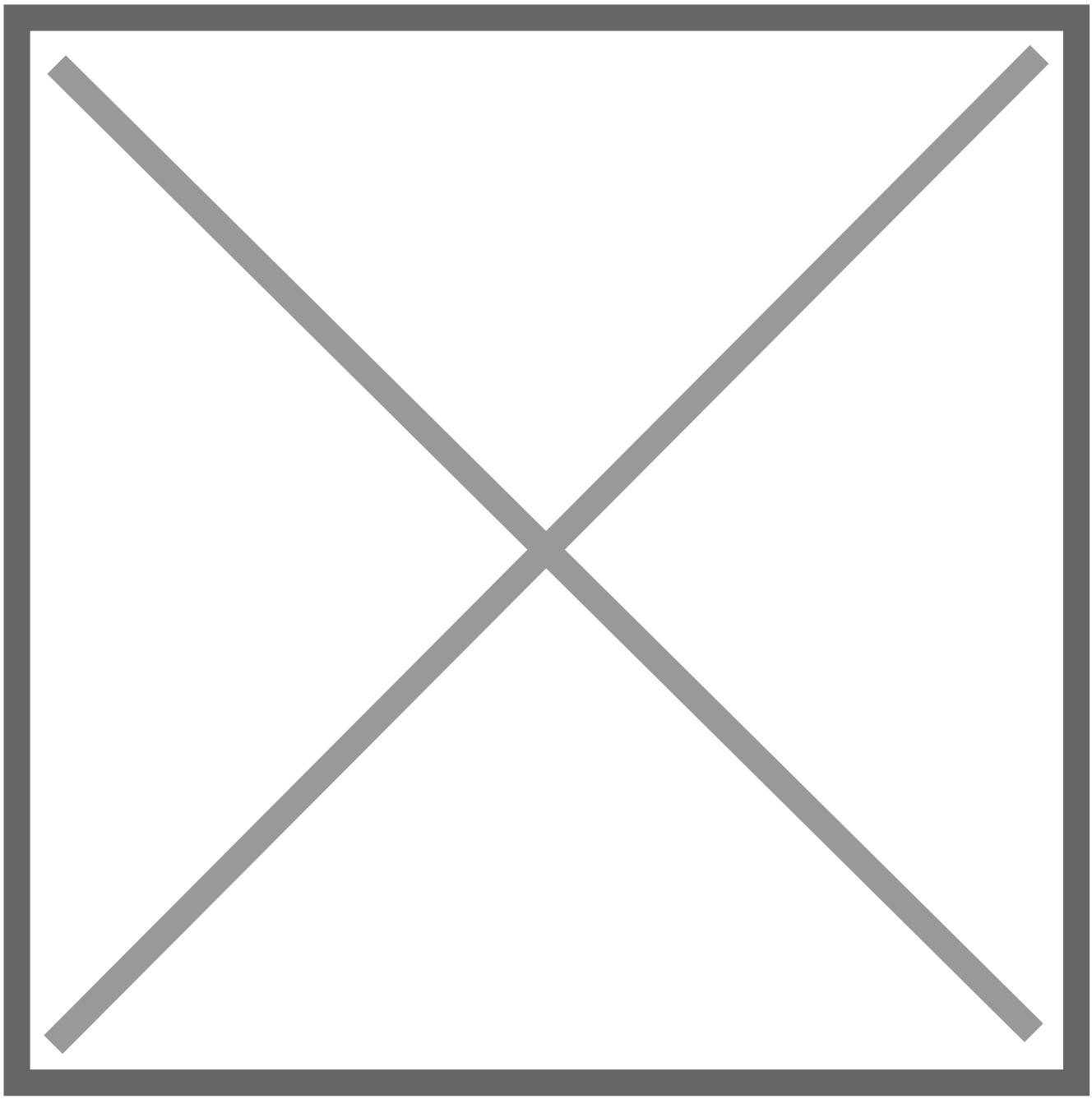
Spirituality



(CNS/Nancy Wiechec)

by Dan Schutte

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

April 6, 2020
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Editor's note: NCR is sharing again with our readers this engaging triduum resource created in 2020 by board member and composer Dan Schutte. You can find the entire Easter triduum virtual liturgy celebration here.

The liturgy of Good Friday should be celebrated in the fullness of the paschal mystery. It is less a day of mourning and more a day of remembering, of seeing once again the boundless love of God expressed in the self-offering of Jesus of Nazareth.

There is a quiet, a silence and soberness, to the liturgy today. We carry in our hearts the suffering of our world, as well as the suffering that touches those we love directly. But in all of this, our eyes remain on Jesus hanging on a cross, the image of a God whose love is so powerful that not even death can defeat it.

It should not be missed that the Passion account from the Gospel of John is chosen for this day. In it, the victory of Christ shines through every step of the way. Jesus' death is not seen as defeat, but as the passage of Christ into glory.

First reading: The suffering servant

The first reading today is from the prophet Isaiah and sets the tone for today's liturgy. The words describe the Suffering Servant who offers himself for our sake, the one who bears our burdens and our infirmities, our sin and brokenness, and takes it with him as he lifts us up. Listen carefully and allow the gift of the Servant to penetrate our hearts.

Advertisement

Psalm response: Be my refuge

The first music to be sung on Good Friday is Psalm 31, the response to the Suffering Servant reading from Isaiah. The refrain, rather than coming from an actual psalm, are the words of Jesus on the cross, "Into your hands I commend my spirit." The words not only capture what Jesus prayed to his Father as he endured the Passion, but they also form a bridge to what our souls pray as we bear the cross that is ours to carry. We join ourselves to the words of Jesus our brother as we call upon our God and surrender our lives into God's hands.

Passion reading: We sing the savior's glory

We all experienced the reading of the Passion numerous times. And so the challenge is to be able to hear it in a new way. Each year, we listen to it with different ears because we are in a different place in life. But it also requires a manner of proclamation that allows us to savor the story, to be with it without rushing. It's humanly impossible to listen for very long without losing focus. The abbreviated version of the Passion offered here is interspersed with a refrain that allows us to participate and respond. Close your eyes as you listen to the story and allow your imagination to take you into the events being described.

Homily

Veneration of the cross: Behold the wood

The act of venerating the cross is the central ritual symbol of this day. People express their honoring of the cross of Jesus in a variety of ways: with a kiss, with a touch, an embrace or a simple bow. For many people, it is one of the most powerful ritual acts of the entire triduum. Each of us brings to the cross the brokenness, fear, shame and struggle that lives in our heart. When we honor the cross, we honor the one who embraces all of our humanity and raises it up toward heaven.

Communion hymn: Glory in the cross

Though with different verses, this is the same hymn with which we began the celebration of the triduum liturgy and reminds us once more of the central theme of these days, "Let us ever glory in the cross of Christ, our salvation and our hope." It is

a more contemplative, quiet setting than the one we used on Holy Thursday, but still reminds us that the cross is not for us a symbol of defeat, but rather a symbol of victory and of the triumph of God's love over death.

Closing hymn: The mystery of God

While the Good Friday liturgy ends the same way it began, in silence. I've included this as a contemplation. Imagine it, perhaps, to be our meditation after communion. For all the metaphors we attribute to God and now matter how much we strive to understand God's ways, there will always be a good deal that is simply mystery. The celebration of this day brings this home in a profound way. Why did God not step in to save his Beloved Son as he hung dying on the cross? Why did this have to be the way of salvation? This is where we are called to embrace the mystery that is God's love. The song invites us to simply rest quietly in that mystery and to trust it.

[Dan Schutte, an NCR board member, is the composer-in-residence at the University of San Francisco.]

This story appears in the **The Easter Triduum with Dan Schutte** feature series. View the full series.