



April 5 / Sunday of the Passion

Matthew 27:41-44

The chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, 'I am God's Son.'" The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

To ponder

Her mother pulled [Ifemelu's] ear, an almost gentle tug, as though reluctant to cause real pain. . . . She pulled it twice, once and then again to emphasize her words. "The devil is using you. You have to pray about this. Do not judge. Leave the judging to God!"

—Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah*

The only judgment that matters

A small Nigerian congregation is rumored to have ties to dirty money. A young woman named Ifemelu has spoken hastily, adding to the climate of suspicion. Her mother pleads with her to not be so quick to judge others.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus was the subject of many rumors. Even now as he suffers on the cross, pouring out the power of his redeeming love, he is mocked and judged. Those who publicly shame him cannot believe he is the Son of God.

Our spirits cringe as we read this scripture text because we know Jesus doesn't deserve this humiliation. But we also know he will overcome the powers of sin, death, and even the demonic ones. So we watch and pray, grateful that this wondrous love is freely offered to strengthen us when we ourselves are judged unfairly by the world. The only judgment that matters belongs to our God of justice, truth, and liberation.

Prayer

Gracious God, free us from the urge to speak with haste, offending those we fail to fully understand. Let our words always honor your wondrous love. Amen.