



April 6

Matthew 27:45-46, 50

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" . . . Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.

To ponder

As Reverend Deal moved into his sermon, the hands of the women unfolded like pairs of raven's wings and flew high above their hats in the air. . . . Then they left their pews. For with some emotions one has to stand. They spoke, for they were full and needed to say. They swayed, for the rivulets of grief or of ecstasy must be rocked. And when they thought of all that life and death

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locked into that little closed coffin, they danced and screamed, not to protest God's will but to acknowledge it. —Toni Morrison, *Sula*

Jesus cried out

Many of us find it difficult to deal with the death of someone close to us, whether the transition from this life is surprisingly peaceful, extraordinarily difficult, or something in between. We struggle with the impact of the loss and the truth of our own mortality. We struggle to deal with emotions that make us and those around us uncomfortable and even afraid.

In crying out on the cross, Jesus makes room in the life of his church for all of us who need to cry out and express our grief with shouting and moaning and groaning, with swaying and rocking and dancing. He cries out for all who feel abandoned, and for all facing their own death or the death of a loved one.

Jesus cries out to God with the opening words of Psalm 22. This psalm also says: "In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame" (vv. 4-5). We too can cry out to God, knowing that we will be heard.

Prayer

Merciful God, whenever grief surrounds us you graciously draw near. We give thanks for such wondrous love. Let all that is within us bless your holy name. Amen.

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