

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

So it has begun. Of course, the beginning of Christ's Passion started the day before the events of tonight's text, though it most certainly has roots in the fall of Adam, and it was known to happen before the foundation of the world. But on this night, Jesus stands before the council, and He is put on trial. To this point, however, your place in His Passion may have been difficult to see.

As we began this Passiontide reflection, we first looked at the plot to kill Jesus, and Judas conspiring with the chief priests. You did not participate in this plot, nor did you conspire with Judas. Though you sin in ways similar to them, and your sins are the cause of the death of Jesus, your part in the plot and betrayal is metaphorical and allegorical, at best. We can say allegory because when you sin, it's as if you were doing these very things, even if you are not doing those very things.

We also saw Jesus anointed for burial by the woman with the alabaster flask. Again, we can draw parallels as in Holy Baptism, you were buried with Christ. There, at the font, you were anointed with the Water and the Word for eternal life. While Jesus was prepared for burial, the preparation was done to Him in your place. You are the one who should have suffered the wrath of God for your sins; you are the one who should have died for them; you are the one who should have been buried and left in the grave for dead. But your God takes your place in all of these, is prepared for them even as He is anointed by the woman with the alabaster flask. What's more, being God, the sufferings of fallen human life were no match for Him as Jesus rose from the grave on the third day.

Jesus then celebrated the Passover with His disciples. Just as you were not present when Judas conspired to betray Jesus, so you were also not present at this Last Supper. But there, Jesus took the unleavened bread and called it His body; He then took a cup of wine and called it His blood. The bread and the wine are the body given and blood shed on the cross the next day, but there they are in that Last Supper. You are included in the words, "Do this in remembrance of me," words that Mark doesn't include, (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25) and "I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." (Mark 14:25) For in those words, you find your practice and hope, eating His body and drinking His blood, proclaiming the death of the Lamb of God till He comes again, (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:26) where you will drink of the fruit of the vine with Jesus at the Feast of Victory of the Lamb which has no end.

Gethsemane, betrayal, and arrest...you're there in all of it. You're the reason Jesus is sweating drops of blood, as He is sorrowful to the point of death for you. You're the reason Jesus is betrayed into the hands of the chief priests and scribes. You're the reason that He is arrested.

Why is He arrested? The charges are blasphemy. He said He will destroy the temple and in three days raise another one. Of course, there is other false testimony, too.

Plot, Last Supper, Gethsemane, betrayal, and arrest...and now, Jesus is on trial, and the charges stick. "But why?" you might ask. You know Jesus to be innocent of the charges. Yet, He stands there silent before the accusers. "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" If

that were you standing there, you would speak one excuse or another, trying to justify yourself one way or another, trying to defend yourself against the charges. Jesus could plead innocent and rightfully defend Himself, but He does not.

He stands there in your stead, because only He would accept all the charges against you; no other man would dare do that knowing that the punishment is death. What Jesus is accused of is rightly said against you, though you would fight it tooth and nail. And Jesus stands there and accepts all of the accusations.

You might say that Jesus rightly accepts them. That's because Jesus was made to be your sin who Himself knew no sin. (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21) In that moment before the council, Jesus receives the false accusations because He is your sin—He is carrying it to the cross to die for it in your place. Your sins are no longer yours, but His. Every bit of your fallen-ness, and that of the whole world, is right there in the court on Jesus' shoulders as the accusations are made.

That means it has been taken from you. It is no longer yours. And, in fact, Jesus takes it to the cross, and there it is nailed with Him and dies with Him. Jesus received the full reward for your sin, and was buried. You were buried with Him by way of Baptism into His death and resurrection. In that most holy flood, your sins were washed off of you and onto your God who stood before the council and was condemned to die. That condemnation was yours, but Jesus took it in your place.

Now what? What about you? Well, your sins are removed from you as far as east is from the west. You no longer stand condemned before God because your God stood condemned before men; now, you are the righteousness of God in Christ. You are free from the bondage and weight of sin because Jesus removed them from you. You are clean, right, pure, just, and holy, all for the sake of Jesus Christ. This is the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ for you.

Jesus was incarnate, was born, was betrayed, was arrested and put on trial, was crucified, and was buried for you. His death for sin is your death to sin. The forgiveness He won on the cross as He spilled His blood covers your sin, every last one of them and every last bit of it. To you, the blood of the Lamb was applied for life and you were declared righteous as you were washed in the water and the Word, and it is your daily sign and seal of a life redeemed for Christ's sake. For by that water, blood, and Word, you are the righteousness of God. You are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.