

## Prayers & Reflection for April

### **Text for Meditation** Philippians 2:6-11

His state was divine,  
yet Christ Jesus did not cling  
to his equality with God  
but emptied himself  
to assume the condition of a slave,  
and became as men are;  
and being as all men are,  
he was humbler yet,  
even to accepting death,  
death on a cross.  
But God raised him high  
and gave him the name  
which is above all other names  
so that all beings  
in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld,  
should bend the knee at the name of Jesus  
and that every tongue should acclaim  
Jesus Christ as Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

### **Responsorial Psalm** Ps 15

**Response** "Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you."

1. O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup;  
it is you yourself who are my prize.  
I keep the Lord ever in my sight:  
since he is at my right hand I shall stand firm. **(R)**
2. And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;  
even my body shall rest in safety.  
For you will not leave my soul among the dead,  
nor let your beloved know decay. **(R)**
3. You will show me the path of life,  
the fullness of joy in your presence,  
at your right hand happiness for ever. **(R)**

### **Concluding Prayer**

Take from us, O God, all pride and vanity, all boasting and self-assertion, and give us the true courage that shows itself in gentleness, the true wisdom that shows itself in simplicity, and the true power that shows itself in modesty. (Charles Kingsley)

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### ***The Only Way Is Down***

Perhaps the fact that the Cross points upwards is the problem. Maybe we accepted too glibly the Fourth Gospel's insistence that this 'raising up of the Son of Man' was actually his exaltation (Jn 3.14, etc). Or possibly we just don't grasp the true horror of Roman Crucifixion – deliberately debasing a man by making him a spectacle for the baying crowd. We certainly missed the irony when Emperor Constantine turned the Cross into a military standard. And so for 1700 years we've been allowed to carry on with our fascination with power and upward mobility.

Right at the start of the Christian Scriptures (for Paul quotes here a hymn written by another hand – perhaps before AD 50) there was a clearer perception of what was happening in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Our Jerusalem Bible translation is misleading: "He was in the form of God," it ought to read (in God's image and likeness, that is, just as Adam had been made – Gen 1.26). But, unlike Adam, Christ made no grab at the fruit of the tree of life. Instead he chose to leave that Paradise on an ever-downward path, into humanity, servitude, and, in the end, into the lowest form of death.

That's how he met us and that's the only way we'll be raised up into life – by following his downward path, through all the bloody horror of broken hearts and lives, letting their stories touch us. There at the bottom of the pile we shall meet Christ at last - and meet him with this promise (Mt 25.37-39): we'll not recognise him.

***Fr. Rob Esdaile, Parish Priest of Our Lady of Lourdes RC Church, Thames Ditton***