

Thanks and praise to God that he was pleased with the obedience of his Son. In silence Jesus suffered the indignity of our sins, so that he might hasten the hour of our redemption, that dark hour on Good Friday afternoon when he loudly and triumphantly cried out, **"It is finished"** (Jn 19:30). In Jesus' indignity Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled: **"I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame"** (Is 50:6, 7). May we ever thank God that in Jesus' injustice his divine justice was served. Because of the indignity Jesus endured, we are healed of our sins and at peace with God. His pain, our gain.

There are people today who are falsely accused. There are people who, though clearly guilty, are set free. To be sure, there is much injustice in the world. But, oh, the greatest injustice of them all! May we never forget that **"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting [our] sins against [us]"** (2 Cor 5:19). We, too, though guilty beyond the shadow of a doubt, are declared not guilty, innocent of all our sins, by the disgrace and indignity that Jesus suffered for us. We walk away scott-free.

A high school vice-principal, who was charged with disciplining students for their misbehavior, spoke of how often the students would insist, "That's not fair!" as he announced their punishment to them. His response never varied. "You don't want it to be fair. You want it to be unfair to your advantage." May we find great comfort and relief in the injustice that Jesus suffered. May we never fail to see in his innocence our guilt and in his guilt our innocence. That's the real injustice of it all. **"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son"** (Jn 3:17, 18). My dear friends in Christ, praise God for the injustice of it all, for in that injustice his divine justice was served. How true it is: His pain, our gain. Amen.

Luke 22:66-71 – *His Pain Our Gain* – St. Paul's, Muskego, WI
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When you think of today's laws and the legal system in general, are your thoughts mostly positive or negative? Consider these examples:

- In the spring of 1981, during my vicar year in Omaha, Nebraska, a young man attempted to assassinate President Ronald Reagan. Millions witnessed this attempt on Reagan's life on live television. The verdict in the shooter's trial, however, was "innocent by reason of insanity."
- At some point during my eight years in Minnesota, a man murdered his wife in the Twin Cities, but was advised by the public defender—someone supported by our tax dollars—not to reveal the location of her body, for without a body there can be no crime.
- A while back, a street person in New York City jumped in front of a subway train, trying to commit suicide. He failed, but then sued the subway company for negligence, and was granted hundreds of thousands of dollars in damages.

If pressed to do so, many of us, I'm sure, could add names to the list, names that—in our minds anyway—are synonymous with injustice.

In our text we have a situation somewhat similar to court rulings today, and yet, at the same time, one that's very different. There's an injustice playing out in Caiaphas' courtroom—we cannot deny that—but there's a monumental difference. Instead of walking away scott-free, an innocent man is condemned to death. It's the epitome of injustice. And yet in that injustice God's divine justice is served. Jesus' pain results in our gain.

In Jesus God's Justice Is Served

- 1. Jesus is found guilty of our blasphemy.**
- 2. Jesus is subjected to our indignity.**

1. The court before which Jesus stands is the Sanhedrin, seventy of the most influential, learned, and respected men in all Israel. It includes scribes, elders, and chief priests, with the high priest presiding as judge. The court's charge is to settle religious disputes. The members of the council, therefore, are to be dedicated to truth and justice, sensing deeply their accountability before God. How well do they carry out their charge?

Jesus stands before the court as a prisoner, but no specific charge has been brought against him. As things begin to develop, it soon becomes apparent that the trial is merely pretense. It's what we call "a kangaroo court." Its purpose is to find some justification for carrying out the decision the judge has already made: Jesus must die.

A preliminary hearing before Annas, the former high priest, has failed to get Jesus to incriminate himself. The council members are so sure that they won't find any credible witnesses that they resort to soliciting false witnesses. But even this fails to produce any testimony on which there is agreement. Incredibly, Jesus is silent throughout. The trial is going nowhere, and time is running out. The court wants a verdict, and it wants it before dawn. We learn from Matthew's Gospel that Caiaphas is so furious at Jesus for staying silent that he finally blurts out, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God" (Mt 26:63).

With this, things have changed. Now God's honor is at stake. Truth must be told, even though this court has no ears for it. Jesus calmly says, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God." Jesus reiterates the claim that he's been making since the beginning of his ministry: "I am the Messiah, the promised One. I am God's Son from heaven, come to redeem Israel." Oh, the shock that Caiaphas now feigns! Matthew tells us that he jumps to his feet, tears his robes, and presents the court with the only verdict possible: "Blasphemy! He's guilty of blasphemy. He's made himself equal to God. He deserves to die."

Blasphemy certainly does deserve death—God says as much in his Word. But what disgrace Jesus suffers here! He's committed no blasphemy. He is the innocent Son of God. There's no one who can prove him guilty of sin. But he who is guiltless is declared guilty.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus didn't appeal, why he didn't speak up, why he was willing to suffer such disgrace? My friends, he did it for us. Because we do what God forbids, because we don't do what God demands, because we grumble when things don't go our way, because we complain when God's dealings with us seem to be unfair, because we seek to please ourselves rather than God—this is why he suffered such disgrace. All these are the sins that dishonor God's holy name, that blaspheme his name among us. Because we are guilty of them all, we are the ones who deserve to die. For God has decreed, "The soul who sins is the one who will die" (Eze 18:4).

What a wonder that Jesus willingly took our sentence on himself. That's our comfort. That's our relief. If he had refused, we would still be damned to hell. What a marvel that Jesus submitted himself to the unjust verdict of blasphemy! Though he always spoke the truth and was guilty of absolutely no sin, yet in God's divine courtroom he was found guilty. In fact, as Paul tells us in today's Second Lesson, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). May we ever thank God that in Jesus' injustice his divine justice was served. His pain, our gain.

2. Jesus' assertion that he's the Son of God and the court's verdict against him cause a sudden eruption of shameless conduct. "Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists," Matthew informs us. "Others slapped him and said, 'Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you'" (Mt 26:67, 68)? What barefaced indignities are heaped on Jesus! What disgusting behavior we see on the part of the religious leaders! The courtroom—usually regarded as a place of dignity, where even a criminal is given due respect and the protection of the law—in this case becomes the scene of some of the most brazen and brash conduct this world has ever seen.

And Jesus' behavior in the face of it all certainly make us think of what he says in one of his Beatitudes, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Mt 5:5)? For all the times when we are not meek and gentle in our dealings with others, when we swing at Jesus and hit him with the fists of our sins, when we spit in his face with unkind words toward him and others, when we blindfold him and challenge him to say who hit him as we try to hide our sins from his sight—for all these—and more—Jesus silently bore the indignity of that long, lonely night. He truly was what Isaiah said he would be, "oppressed and afflicted; yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth" (Is 53:7).

All of this is what Jesus silently suffered as our sin-bearer. In fact, this was just the beginning of it all. So much more was still to come. There would be more insults, whippings, a crown of thorns, a purple robe, crucifixion, and, finally, the pain and agony of hell itself, when his heavenly Father would turn his face away from his one and only, his dearly beloved Son.