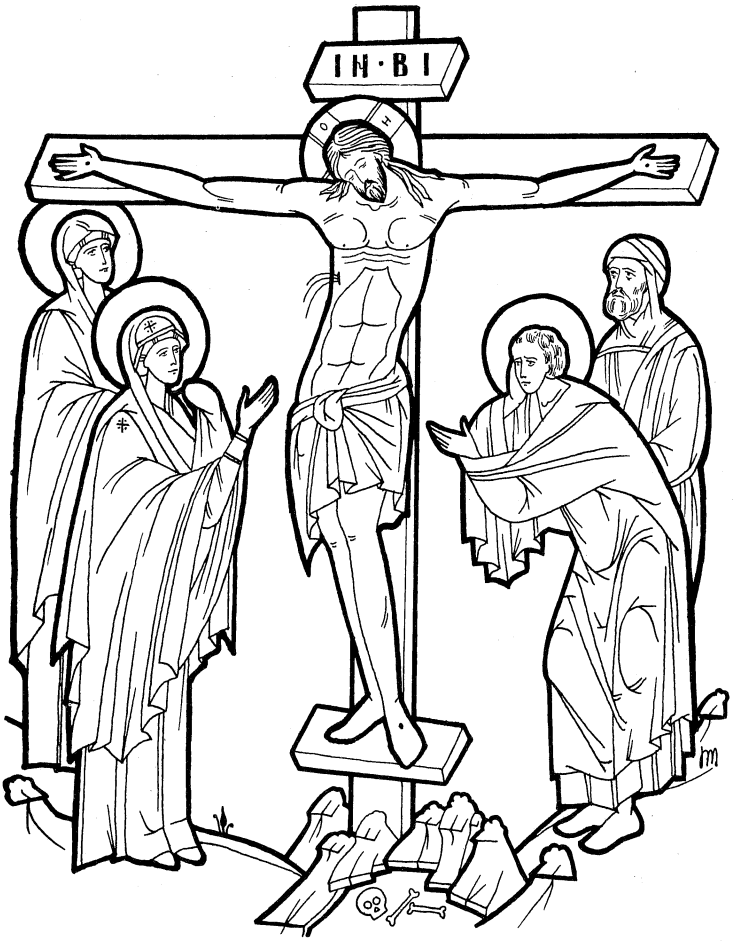

"When You were crucified, O Christ, the tyranny of the enemy was destroyed, and his power was trampled underfoot. For it was not an angel nor a man that saved us, but You, O Lord."

Royal Hours of Great Friday: Troparion of the First Hour

Great Friday

Sister Margaret Kapusnak

"An awesome and glorious mystery occurs today: the One Who cannot be contained is now restrained. He Who freed Adam from the curse is bound. The Searcher of hearts and souls is questioned unjustly. He Who confined the deep is now confined to prison.... The Creator is struck by the hand of a creature. The Judge of the living and the dead is condemned to the cross. He Who conquered hell is sealed in a tomb. O innocent Lord Who graciously suffered all things and saved all people from the curse: glory be to You!"

Entombment Vespers on Great Friday

This sticheron expresses in many different ways the mystery of the passion and death of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. And all of these poetical but paradoxical statements point to the greatest paradox of all: that by His dying, Jesus redeemed me from the death of sin and purchased for me new life in Himself.

To be willing to live the Christian life, this new life in Christ, is to be willing to live in such a paradox. It is to believe the words of the Holy Apostle Paul who said: "The message of the cross is complete absurdity to those who are headed for ruin, but to us who are experiencing salvation, it is the power of God." *(I Corinthians 1:1)*

This power of God is revealed to me most strikingly in the redemptive acts of Jesus. It is the power of a love which moved Him to accept the Father's will, to bring all of humanity into the Kingdom, and to embrace the cross. All of the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross is futile unless I decide to accept it, and even more, to embrace it. I am invited to do this day by day as Christ's disciple. I enter into the mystery of union with Him in His passion and death through my surrender in self-giving, however it might be expressed in my life. Perhaps that may be letting my children follow the way God is calling them and not the career I have dreamed about for them. It could be quietly accepting the pain of being helpless and needing to be cared for in a debilitating illness.

Jesus suffered and died for me centuries ago. I am being redeemed now. There is really no time gap between these two events. In that mystical area of time beyond time, Jesus' redeeming act and my being redeemed are going on together now—this day, hour, minute. When I pray with the Church, I am not praying in memory of an event; I am living in the dynamics of the event with that special awareness which recognizes the presence of the Lord. I sit still and let the prayers, hymns, and readings speak to me. And in the strength of these, I encounter the Lord and my own life with new courage.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: **Isaiah 52:13 - 54:1**
Jeremiah 11:18 - 12:5
Job 42:12-17
Exodus 33:11-23
Zechariah 11:10-13