



GOOD FRIDAY 2026

Isaiah 52:13-53:13 Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9 John 18:1-19:42

The source of this reflection is the book **The Ladder**

By Edward Hays, Forest Peace Publishing, 1999

The Ladder

Narrator: It was the ninth hour as the sky turned an ugly black, the three criminals hanging in agony on their crosses of death. As the wind began to swirl brown clouds of dust around the hilltop, a Roman soldier, moved by pity, soaked a sponge in drugged wine, placed it on the end of his lance and offered it to the dying men.

Narrator: The first dying criminal raised his head and eagerly sucked at the sponge. Finished he threw his head backwards, gasping for air. The soldier next came to the criminal in the middle and raised the sponge on his spear to him. Without raising his battered head, he only shook it in a wordless “no.” The soldier pushed the sponge closer,

Speaker: Take it, Take it! There’s no shame in trying to dull the pain.

Narrator: The condemned man simply shook his head again and spoke a few faint words.

Speaker: I can’t hear you. If you don’t want drugged wine, what do you want?

Narrator: Raising his head, the dying man opened his parched lips,

Jesus: Give me a ladder.

Narrator: Hearing this, the other soldiers burst out in laughter,

Speaker: He wants to climb down from his cross!

Narrator: Grabbing the large wooden ladder used to raise prisoners to their crosses, another soldier jeered at the crucified criminal,

Speaker: Anything we can do to please you.

Narrator: He began slamming the heavy ladder repeatedly against the already bruised and bloody body of the dying man.

Narrator: The other soldiers danced around his cross, chanting,

Speaker: Climb higher, Your Majesty, for as the King of the Criminals you must hang higher than common criminals.

Narrator: The soldiers continued to ridicule their dying victim and to slam the ladder against him. He only cried out,

Jesus: I find my joy in God my Savior, for the Almighty has done great things for me.

Narrator: The criminal crucified on his left yelled down to those below,

Speaker: Stop abusing this man, for he is a Son of God.

Narrator: The criminal on the far right yelled over,

Speaker: Shut your mouth, fool, this is no business of ours.

Narrator: Then, the one crucified in the middle slowly turned his head to the one on his left saying,

Jesus: I rejoice that you also have used the ladder. I assure you, this very day you are with me in Paradise.

Fr. Bob: Jesus climbed higher, thus asking for a ladder to remind us that in our suffering – and there will be suffering – we climb higher because of his cross. So, as we venerate the cross today – bring your ladder and climb higher with the Lord's help.