

“Blood and Water”

John 19:34

John 19:34 states, “One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.” Blood. It’s a major theme in John’s Gospel. Already in John 1:29, the evangelist writes, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” The Lamb, Jesus, will shed His blood. John 1:36 reiterates this central idea in the Fourth Gospel, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” In John 6:54, Jesus says, “Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life.” In John’s Gospel, blood serves one purpose: to wash away sin.

Sin is always at the door, standing at the door of our lives. That’s because we never measure up. We never do enough. We all fall short of the glory of God.

There’s only one solution to sin. Stand with John under Christ’s cross. “He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe” (John 19:35). John was there, at the

cross. He saw it all happen. John gives his testimony. And his testimony is true.

What would that be? Christ's blood alone washes away sin. All sin. Everyone's sin.

Yours. Mine. Theirs. For everyone who believes, all sin is forgiven!

Sin is forgiven. Good Friday, though, calls us to remember what it cost Jesus. His crucifixion at Golgotha was an act of utter brutality. Jesus is first stripped before Herod's soldiers. He's stripped again at the command of Pilate. And then He is stripped once more at the cross when the soldiers divide His garments by casting lots.

When Jesus was flogged by the Romans the next day, lacerations tore into His underlying skeletal muscles and produced quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh.

Roman soldiers used a whip of braided leather thongs with spikes woven into them. When the whip would strike the flesh, spikes would cause deep bruises and lacerations. The whipping would have gone all the way from the shoulders down the back and the back of the legs. The Romans threw Jesus on the wood and drove tapered spikes through His wrists and feet—all the while mocking Him and spitting on Him.

On the cross, Christ's arms were stretched six inches upward so His shoulders were dislocated. The stress of His diaphragm forced His chest into an inhaling position. In order to exhale, Christ had to push up, using His feet to relieve pressure on His diaphragm, and temporarily exhale. In doing so, the nail would tear through His feet, eventually locking up against his tarsal bones.

For six hours, this breathing motion went on and on and on, with Christ scraping His shredded back against the coarse wood until He became completely exhausted and unable to push up and breathe.

As Jesus slowed down His breathing, He went into respiratory acidosis—leading to an irregular heartbeat. In fact, with His heart beating erratically, Jesus would have known that death was near. He said, “It is finished,” and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

Then “One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe” (John 19:34–35).

For all of the torment and terror of crucifixion, as the hymn writer says, “But the deepest stroke that pierced Him was the stroke that justice gave.” The burden of our sin; being forsaken by God the Father; “He who was without sin became sin for us,” as St. Paul says. As horrifying and painful as Roman style crucifixion was, the weight of our sin was more.

The weight of our sin is a burden we could not carry. Thanks be to God that Christ our Lord carried it for us to the cross and grave.

The water and blood coming out of His side as the pericardial sack was pierced with the spear was a sure sign that Jesus was dead. Having been washed in the blood of the Lamb – the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; having been washed with the water and the blood which cleanses us of all our sin, we certainty that the stain and guilt of all of our sin has been removed.

The Savior’s blood has washed us. Christ’s blood is the only solution for all of our sin. Through our Baptism, we stand at the foot of the cross, like John, forever forgiven. Amen.