

TFTD 23.37

Weds April

5th

Matt 26.57-75

At the house of Caiaphas

At the House of Caiaphas in Jerusalem, overlooking the Temple Mount, there are worn stone steps cut into the bedrock, leading up from the Kidron Valley to the high priest's courtyard. These are the steps Jesus was hustled up that night — with Peter following at a safe distance.



Peter remembered that Jesus had said, “Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out, and wept bitterly. Matthew 26.75

As Jesus disappears from view, swept off by the

arresting squadron, the focus moves to Peter. Exhausted, confused, ashamed at his own desertion, Peter follows the torches at a distance — down into the valley, below the Temple walls, and up the stone-cut steps leading through the gardens of the wealthy priests who live on the far slopes of the Kidron valley. The squadron moves fast, with an air of purpose. Ahead of them is a large house with lights in the windows, a fire burning in the courtyard, a discreet air of bustle and busyness, even in the middle of the night. This is the house of Caiaphas the High Priest. He has company, by the sound of it. What's going on, here in the dead of night?

Inside, a kangaroo court, illegally convened in the night. Its business is to find a way to dispose of a political embarrassment, a popular trouble-maker who is threatening the carefully-crafted consensus between local and imperial power. Witnesses are summoned, but fail to agree. The prisoner is silent (v.63).

But when challenged under oath, he speaks one word of prophetic truth: “You have said it yourself. But from now on, you will see the Son of Man

sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven” (v.64). It’s a quotation from the book of Daniel (7.13). But “the son of man” is also in Aramaic a common idiom for referring to oneself: so Jesus could be saying “You will see me coming with the clouds ...” That’s sufficient for a charge of blasphemy (v.65), sufficient for a guilty verdict — and sufficient to turn the prisoner from person to object, to a plaything exposed to mockery and derision (v.67).

And outside? Peter is getting increasingly nervous. Dawn is coming, and people are giving him strange looks, wondering about his clothes, his Galilean accent. Weren’t you one of them? Didn’t I see you with him? Three times, Peter denies it: No, I’m not one of them! No, I’m not with him! No, I haven’t got any connection with Jesus — and then the cock crows. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you: for by your holy cross you have redeemed us — even when we deny that we know you.

God bless, Loveday

Lord God, whose blessed Son our Saviour gave his

back to the smiters, and did not hide his face from shame: give us grace to endure the sufferings of this present time with sure confidence in the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

[Common Worship Post-Communion for the Third Sunday in Lent, © The Archbishops' Council 2006]

