

3<sup>RD</sup> SCRIPTURAL STATION - JESUS IS CONDEMNED BY THE SANHEDRIN  
by Fr Robbie Low

(Mt 26 v 57-67. Mk. 14 v 53-65. Lk. 22 v 54-55, 69-71. Jn. 18 v 24)

A government spokesman:

There is a nervous clearing of throats, a polite cough, the febrile buzz of nervous laughter. The Court is not used to assembling at ungodly hours. The old High Priest, the father-in-law, the power behind the throne, has choreographed it.

A night arrest, scurrilous rumours, defuse the bubbling unrest, pre-emptive strike, security of the nation etc.

The men of power summoned to deliberate, to question, to suppress.

And in He comes, hands bound, robe a little dishevelled, dirt marks on the knees, a little roughed up –

‘No need for that, we can leave that to the Romans. Stand easy. No Iscariot cannot come in. Make himself scarce. He’s got the money. What else does he want. Be off and don’t return or it will be the worse for him.’

So this is what the fuss has all been about. This cocky northern bastard boy, pretending to the throne of David, launching a campaign that could set the land ablaze. At last we get a close look at this growing threat to our national peace and security.

‘What do you want, boy? You think you can overturn the establishment with a few tricks and some theological hi-jinx?

You think you can destroy this Temple – so long in the building – this beautiful sign of our coherence and the miracle of our return from exile?

You think we are going to stand idly by while you, in your arrogance and foolishness, give Rome the occasion to destroy all that we have so painstakingly rebuilt.

You think you can outsmart the smartest theological minds in the land, ride roughshod over the Law, strafe our holiest groups with your words of

condemnation, mix freely with gentile scum and seek to lead this people.  
Sonny Jim, better men than you have tried.

You think we missed the significance of your entry into the Holy City, through the Golden Gate, riding on that donkey. You think that we alone have not read the prophecy of the Messiah.

Who do you think you are? Some kind of God?

Nevertheless, being just men, we will hear you out.

We have witnesses here who heard you blaspheme. Witnesses who heard you talk of destroying the Temple and, pardon my laughter, rebuild it in a few days, three was it?

You may be banking on the fact that we have no access, of our own authority, to the death penalty but there are ways and means. Rome holds mortal sway and just recall what happened to that upstart cousin of yours who thought he could cock a snook at Herod's sovereign jurisprudence.

So, tell us this.....by what extraordinary authority do you claim to act? We'd like to hear the whole sordid confession of this conspiracy from its fountainhead.

Silence? Dumb insolence, more like.

Do you know to whom you are not speaking, Mr. Christ?

He said what?

Is this true? You used the sacred name of G-d. And these dumb fools were on their faces in seconds?

That is enough. Only the High Priest can do this. Only on Atonement. Only once. Only after he has entered the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifice to risk of his life before the Almighty, bearing the sins of his people.

You, low born, peasant oaf arrogate to yourself the role of High Priest and seek to be the sacrifice for their sins.

So be it. We will play out this pantomime. Priest and sacrifice you shall be.

As my dear son- in- law, and current holder of the High Priesthood, has so wisely observed,

'It is better that one man die for the people' than have our way of life destroyed.

You, my unlucky, upstart friend would seem to have an ambition to be that man. You will not be disappointed.

Take Him away.

Can you believe the arrogance? I see that He has a certain something – a head-turner, a crowd -puller, perhaps even a genuine thaumaturge. But dangerous? And some.

My fellow members of Council, we cannot afford to drop our vigilance until this is well over and the final scenes have been played out to our satisfaction and mutual security.

We must play our hand carefully. The street must reflect our view. There must be no wavering or misplaced compassion for this deviant sect and its 'smart Alec' leader. Either He is buried or the nation is.

Resolve yourselves to see this through without recourse to weakling mercy.

No, Nicodemus, you may not intercede, our business is complete.

You are a fool, not for the first time, nor, I suspect, the last.

You may be taken in by His ridiculous riddles and obscurantist meanderings but we are not.

Gentlemen, you may take to your beds when and only when this business is satisfactorily complete. There remains much to do if this Passover is to be free of the burgeoning plague of this wild dreamer.

To your appointed places. We need our supporters out on the street bright and early. Pilate will not want trouble after the row at Caesarea. We needs must strengthen his brutal arm. The verdict must be in by breakfast that the deed and verdict may not be undone.

Cruel to be kind.....they'll thank us for it eventually.

Good government coming to the aid of the people.'