

Thought for the day - Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2023

By Revd John Marshall

Good Friday To the good thief Saunders Lewis

I thought this retelling of an old story was excellent.

You did not see him on the mountain of Transfiguration

Nor walking the sea at night;

You never saw corpses blushing when a bier or a sepulchre

Was struck by his cry.

It was in the rawness of his flesh and his dirt that you saw Him

Whipped and under thorns,

And in his nailing like a sack of bones outside the town

On a pole, like a scarecrow.

You never heard the making of the parables like a

Parthenon of words,

Nor his tone when He talks of his father,

Neither did you hear the secrets of the room above,

Nor the prayer before Cedron and th treachery,

It was the racket of a crowd of sadists revelling in pain

And their screeches, howls, curses and shouts

That you heard the profound

cry of the breaking heart of their prey.

'Why hast thou forsaken me ?

You hanging on his right; on his left, your brother;

Writhing like skinned frogs,  
Flea-bitten petty thieves  
Thrown in as a retinue to his shame,  
Courtiers to a mock king in his pain.

O Master of courtesy and manners, who enlightened you  
About your part in this harsh parody?  
'Lord, when you come into your kingdom, remember me,' –  
The kingdom that was conquered through death.  
Rex Judaecorum, it was you who saw first the vain  
Blasphemy as a living oracle.  
You who first believed in the Latin, Hebrew and Greek,  
That the gallows was the throne of God.

O thief who took Paradise from the nails of a gibbet  
Foremost of the nobilitas of heaven,  
Before the hour of death pray that it may be given for us  
To perceive Him and to taste him.

Sanders Lewis 1893-1985

Richard Harries Hearing God in Poetry

I love the promise Jesus made to the thief.