



**ELM Online Seminar: "How Does the World Look at Holy Week and Easter?"
A Service for Good Friday**

LITURGY FOR GOOD FRIDAY
Meditation on the death of Jesus
in a congregational setting
Comunidad Dios es Amor #2, La Ceiba, Honduras
by Dr. Soraya Heinrich-Eberle

Introduction:

Good Friday (*Viernes Santo*), as well as the entire Holy Week, are among the high points of Central American religiosity and cultural life.

In most Central American countries, Roman Catholicism is the predominant religion due to Spanish colonization. Among the historic Protestant churches (which are especially prominent in African-descent communities), there are some Methodists, Anglicans, Baptists and Mennonite branches. This is due to the English transport of slaves until the 19th century, and the banana industry of the U.S.A. However, these churches are not very influential. In the last 30-40 years, there has been a growing number of independent Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches, reaching 40% of the population in some regions. In a way, it seems that the people's religiosity contributes to maintaining the status quo.

The Lutheran presence is ephemeral and has practically no impact on the region. Most Lutheran churches in the region have been in existence for 30 to 50 years in their respective countries. In other words, a large part of the people who attend the Lutheran church come from Roman Catholicism or Pentecostal movements.

Honduran Context:

The congregation for which this liturgy was prepared is situated on the northern coast of Honduras, a region bathed by the Caribbean Sea, where the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal presence is estimated at 50% of the population, and another 47% declare themselves Roman Catholic.

Honduras is the most violent and vulnerable country in the region; until recently it was in a narco-state regime. Dominated by maras (organized crime groups), militias and foreign exploitation, daily life is marked by violence, marginalization of minorities

through threats and deprivation of rights, a very high rate of femicides, as well as child deaths and abuse. There is no efficient labor legislation and high unemployment encourages informal work. The level of illiteracy among adults is close to 50%.

It has a relatively insignificant Lutheran church, with 11 congregations in total, each of which has around 50 members. The liturgy and theology of this church present a mixture of the most different “evangelizing colonizing” tendencies: Missouri Synod Lutheranism (the first to be brought to the country); Roman Catholic background; Anglicanism (where some Lutheran pastors sought training;) the Lutheran churches of Bavaria (Mission Eine Welt); Brazil; and the main financial supporters and partners, the ELCA and Sweden. In addition all churches in the region derive, in a certain way, from the Teologia de la Vida of the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod.

The Holy Week festivities in the region have two clashing currents: on the one hand, there is the celebration originating from popular Catholicism, mixed with elements of the culture of indigenous Central American peoples. On the other hand, there is the non-observance of the dates of the liturgical calendar by neo-Pentecostal movements, in direct opposition to Catholicism. In other words, a large part of the population does not even celebrate the Passion or Easter; another part celebrates it within the rites of popular and mystical Catholicism.

Death and violence, harsh punishment and physical martyrdom are everyday life for the local population. Shame, contempt and failure are their daily bread. Therefore, there is a morbid penchant for the blood, the wounds, the scars of Jesus, the beatings and the pain. On the other hand, the way of approaching death is never discreet or reserved; the public expression of the emotions of loss is considered a sign of appreciation and consideration for the person who has passed away. There is frequent, exaggerated crying, disconsolateness, despair and cries such as: “What will become of me?” when faced with the death of family members, for example.

In these contexts, the main theological aspects that the population encounters are a suffering, injured, fragile, pitiful and defeated Jesus and a rude, punishing and violent God, whose will must be accepted without discussion, always delivered by some chosen intermediary. At the same time, it is necessary to do and pay penance through personal suffering in order to achieve God's grace.

On Good Friday, the mockery of Judas takes place, when people in costumes take to the streets and ask passersby for money, with which they promise to put an end to (kill) Judas, the traitor. This is carried out amidst much celebration; it's a sad lynching.

Good Friday processions are also common. They are very interesting: on the main streets of the cities in the early hours of the morning, colored salt, sand or sawdust, as well as flowers, fruits and seeds are used to make colorful carpets (alfombras) with scenes from Jesus' passion or liturgical symbols, such as the Easter Lamb. Later, the procession of the crucified Christ crosses these streets, as if in a true funeral march. People wear black, carry candles and many penitents carry heavy crosses and other symbolic objects to atone for their sins.

Features of the celebration:

On top of a red earth mountain, in a forgotten part of the city, dominated by organized crime and fear, where official Catholicism, public power and pastors with ties don't reach, there is a small congregation trying to be Lutheran and live the principles of the Reformation - around 25 people, most of them women, children and young people. Of these, there are many people who do not read, but who are seeking schooling through Church projects. Still, everything is based on oral communication. Excited children, who see services as their own space; and their mothers, whose eyes demonstrate a lack of hope in a way that makes a strong impression. The people there, in general, were baptized and confirmed within the last four years. In most cases, the people who are in the community are remnants of migration; that is, someone in each family, especially men and young people, has already migrated. These are the people who are left.

The main challenge of the celebration is to talk about hope in the context of death. Does Jesus' death bring hope?

And how can we do this, speaking in a concrete and simple way, without theological intellectualization, but still profound?

Liturgical space/ambiance:

Morning service, 8:30 am (in the afternoon it usually rains at this time of year, and at night it is not possible to hold meetings for safety reasons)

Chairs arranged facing the altar, black lining and no other elements. There is no pulpit or easel. A black cloth covers the wall behind the altar.

Musical instruments: only a guitar. Distribute the hymnals on the chairs.

Provide a rustic cross, made with logs and ropes, of medium size to be placed on the altar during the entrance procession. The trees are a characteristic of the region, surrounded by a natural reserve; thus, the cross will be very appropriate to the context.

Choose and prepare women and young people for the initial procession and the biblical readings and the General Prayer of the Church. The liturgy is always presided over by the ordained minister and people from the congregation.

This moment of meditation does not have an initial invocation of the Trinity nor a blessing and sending at the end, because it is in the context of the Easter Triduum, a celebration that begins on Thursday and ends on Easter Sunday.

- **Informal communication at the entrance:** during this meditative time, we will remain silent, both at the beginning and at the end. Mothers are asked to keep an eye on young children. Let's join the celebration space together.

Entrance Liturgy

Processional entrance: **the people enter together and in silence. A cross and a large, lit candle are processed in. The candle is placed on the altar, next to the cross.**

Introduction:

L: With the psalmist, in Psalm 22:1-2, we ask: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night but find no rest.*

L: These are words for a day like today, when Jesus experienced pain and abandonment on the cross. We remember this loneliness, the fear of death. But on this day we also celebrate the strength and testimony of Christ's love for us, for humanity, because he is the one who "lays down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

L: The cross on the altar is a symbol of pain and death; but it is more than that - it is the ultimate symbol of God's friendship for each and every one of us and of our adoption as daughters and sons. The cross connects earth and heaven, person with person: there is no more room for enmity, violence and oppression.

L: In silence, contemplate upon the cross.

(silence)

L: Now, contemplate upon the people around you: Jesus' death on the cross allows you to live in peace and love with these people.

(silence)

Confession of Sins:

L: Still, we don't always live in a way worthy of such great love and the salvation we have received. That's why we sing:

C: ♪ Si fui motivo de dolor / If I Have Been the Source of Pain

(L: C. Maud Battersby, M: Pablo Sosa, T: Sara Menéndez de Hall)

[Si fui motivo de dolor / If I Have Been the Source of Pain \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

<p>1. Si fui motivo de dolor, Señor; si por mi causa el débil tropezó; si en tus caminos yo no quise andar, ¡perdón, Señor!</p> <p>2. Si vana y fútil mi palabra fue; si al que sufría en su dolor dejé; no me condenes tú por mi maldad, ¡perdón, Señor!</p> <p>3. Si por la vida quise andar en paz, tranquilo, libre y sin luchar por ti, cuando anhelabas verme en la lid, ¡perdón, Señor!</p> <p>4. Escucha, oh, Dios, mi pobre confesión, y líbrame de tentación sutil. Ayúdame a luchar y a servir. ¡Amén, amén!</p>	<p>1. If I have been the source of pain, o God; If to the weak I have refused my strength; If, in rebellion, I have strayed away: Forgive me, Lord</p> <p>2. If I have spoken words of cruelty, If I have left some suffering unrelieved; Condemn not my insensitivity: Forgive me, Lord.</p> <p>3. If I've insisted on a peaceful life; far from the struggles that the gospel brings; when you prefer to guide me to strife: Forgive me, Lord.</p> <p>4. Receive, o God, this ardent word of prayer, and free me from temptations subtle snare; with tender patience, lead me to your care. Amén, amén.</p>
---	---

L: Let us hope confidently for God's mercy, because "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3:16). Christ died so that we can live fully, as people who receive God's grace daily. Amen.

Kyrie eleison:

L: Remembering the pain of Jesus, we also remember the pain of the oppressed men and women of the earth. The protest of every wronged innocent. The perplexity of war, violence, oppression, the groan of the entire creation. Let us cry out to God:

C: ♪ For the Troubles and Sufferings / Pelas dores deste mundo

L and M: Rodolfo Gaede Neto; T: Juan Gattinoni

<https://www.luteranos.com.br/conteudo/imploramos-tu-piedad-oh-buen-senor>

<p><i>Simploramos tu piedad, oh, buen Señor, por quien sufre en este mundo, A una gime toda la creación. Tus oídos se inclinen al clamor de tu gente oprimida, apura, oh, Señor, tu salvación.</i></p> <p><i>Sea tu paz, bendita y hermanada a la justicia que abrace al mundo entero: ¡ten compasión! Que tu poder, sustente el testimonio de tu pueblo; tu reino venga hoy, ¡Kyrie Eleison!</i></p>	<p><i>For the troubles and the sufferings of the world, God, we call upon your mercy; The whole creation's laboring in pain! Lend an ear to the rising cry for help from oppressed and hopeless people: Come! Hasten your salvation, healing, love! We pray for peace, the blessed peace that comes from making justice, to cover and embrace us. Have Mercy, Lord! We pray for power, the power that will sustain your people's witness: until your Kingdom come, Kyrie eleison!</i></p>	<p><i>Für die Sorgen und das Leiden dieser Welt, Gott, wir bitten dich gemeinsam: erbarme dich, erhöere unsern Ruf! Hör das Seufzen der Schöpfung Tag und Nacht. Sieh die Tränen deiner Kinder. Wir sehnen uns nach dir, sei du uns nah!</i></p> <p><i>Gib Frieden, Gott, Gerechtigkeit und Freiheit allen Menschen. Umarme diese Welt, Herr, erbarme dich! Und gib uns Kraft, um deiner Liebe ein Gesicht zu geben, bis uns der Himmel blüht. Kyrie Eleison!</i></p>
---	---	---

Prayer of the Day:

L: Just God, loving God: we are perplexed and confused, faced with the death and suffering of Jesus, our Savior. *(silence)* Grant us the grace to understand that this death is our life. And so, we live to serve you and people and witness your great love. We ask you in the name of Jesus, the one who lies on the cross. Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

Old Testament Reading:

L: Reading from the Old Testament, from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 52 verse 13 to chapter 53 verse 12:

(silence)

Gospel:

L: *(signals for the congregation to stand)* The Gospel of Jesus Christ, as reported by the Evangelist John, chapter 19, verses 16 to 30:

(silence, during which an assistant goes to the altar and blows out the candle)

Music (solo voice): ♪ Baguala de la muerte, stanzas 1-3

Homero Perera and Federico Pagura

[BAGUALA DE LA MUERTE \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

<p>1. Todo acabó en una tumba, todo acabó en una cruz; todos los sueños forjados en años de lucha, de asombro y dolor. Nadie responde a esta angustia. ¿Ha enmudecido hasta Dios? Se ha puesto el sol en el mundo, Señor, y murió la esperanza.</p> <p>2. "¿Por qué me has abandonado?" dijo, muriendo, Jesús; y así clamamos nosotros, ceranos de sombras, en la soledad Se hace pesada la vida cuando no vemos su fin; y hoy se ha tragado la tierra la luz que alumbra el camino.</p> <p>3. Todo acabó en una tumba; nadie pregunte por qué. Mudos la tierra y el cielo contemplan la muerte de un soplo de fe. Nadie nos busque consuelo, nadie nos dé explicación; en esa tumba la vida acabó, sólo reina la muerte.</p>	<p>1. There at a tomb, all was ended; there on a cross, all has died: All of the dreaming we forged in the years of astonishment, struggle and pain. No one responds to this anguish here in the silence of God. Gone is the sun that has set on the world and our hope, too, is dying.</p> <p>2. "Why, my God, have you forsaken?" Jesus cried out from the cross. So we call out when the shadows surround us and leave us afraid and alone. Life becomes weary and heavy now that its purpose seems gone, Now that the darkness has swallowed the light that once brightened our pathway.</p> <p>3. There at a tomb it all ended; no one has dared to ask why. Mute are the heavens and earth in their witness and faith has blown out like a breath. No one has offered us comfort; no one defends or explains. There at that tomb life is finished and death reigns alone in its kingdom.</p>
---	--

Prayers of the Church:

L: Let us pray:

L: We thank you, O God of mercy, for Jesus Christ: your testimony of love and dedication for all humanity. We understand that his death brings us life; by his pains and wounds we were healed.

L: We ask you for so many people who suffer in our world. Looking at Jesus, who joined in his suffering with all of them, we ask you:

- for those who are in the agony of imminent death, often victims of hunger, illness, violence and pain, the death of the body (*silence*);

- for the women and children of our land, daily victims of humiliation, exploitation and abuse, the death of hope (*silence*);

- for oppressed people, whose rights are suppressed, denied or made invisible by power structures, the death of dignity and respect (*silence*);

- for people who are experiencing loneliness or mourning, or who have seen their family migrate, with no hope of a reunion; the death of relationships (*silence*);

- for the people who are at the mercy of the wars that ravage our world; large and small wars, civil wars or wars between nations; the death of peace and justice (*silence*);

We pray that as a church we will be courageous witnesses of your love and your desire for peace and reconciliation.

We ask for the people in power to repent of their evil ways and make their decisions fairly and honestly. We haven't given up on calling for this yet!

We place everything in your hands, through and in the name of Jesus, a "man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, (Isaiah 53:3). Therefore, as he taught us, we also pray:

Our Father

Sending Liturgy

Announcements: (only the essential ones, e.g. those related to the Easter Triduum)

Final hymn:

L: We say goodbye today with a heart full of sorrow for the loss of our friend Jesus. At the same time, we are grateful because through his coming, life and death we have hope to continue writing the story of the Kingdom of God in our world, as well as our own history day by day. Let us sing the final hymn and, shortly after, we leave this space in silence, just as we entered.

C: ♪ Because He Came

L: Homero Perera; M: Federico Pagura

[Agape: songs of hope and reconciliation 72. Porque él entró en el mundo y en la historia | Hymnary.org](#)

<i>1. Porque él entró en el mundo y en la historia; porque él quebró el silencio y la agonía; porque llenó la tierra de su gloria; porque fue luz en nuestra noche fría; porque él nació en un pesebre oscuro; porque él vivió sembrando amor y vida; porque partió los corazones duros y levantó las almas abatidas:</i>	<i>Because he came into the world and history, Because he broke the silence and the agony, Because he filled the earth with his glory Because he was light in our cold night. Because he was born in a dark manger, Because he lived sowing love and life, Because he opened up the hard hearts And lifted up the downcast souls</i>	<i>1. In unser Leben, in unsre Geschichte ist er gekommen, sie mit uns zu teilen, und hat das Schweigen, hat die Angst zerbrochen und unsre Dunkelheit in Licht verwandelt. In einem unbekanntem Stall geboren, um Liebe auszusäen und neues Leben, erstarrte Herzen endlich zu erweichen und die zu stützen, die am Boden liegen.</i>
---	--	--

<p>Estríbillo: <i>Por eso es que hoy tenemos esperanza. Por eso es que hoy luchamos con porfía. Por eso es que hoy miramos con confianza el porvenir en esta tierra mía/ el porvenir.</i></p> <p><i>2. Porque atacó a ambiciosos mercaderes y denunció maldad e hipocresía. Porque exaltó a los niños, las mujeres, y rechazó a los que de orgullo ardían.</i></p> <p><i>Porque el cargó la cruz de nuestras penas y saboreó la hiel de nuestros males. Porque aceptó sufrir nuestra condena y así morir por todos los mortales.</i></p>	<p>Refrain: That's why we have hope today That's why we fight tenaciously today That's why today we look with confidence To the future of this land of mine/ To the future</p> <p><i>2. Because he attacked the ambitious merchants, And denounced evil and hypocrisy, Because he exalted the children, the women, And rejected those who burn with pride</i></p> <p><i>Because he carried the cross of our suffering And tasted the bitterness of our ills Because he accepted to suffer our condemnation And thus died for all mortals.</i></p>	<p>Refrain: Und darum sind wir heute voller Hoffnung, und darum kämpfen wir heut ohne Zittern, und darum blicken wir heut voll Vertrauen in eine neue Zukunft für uns alle/auf das, was kommt.</p> <p><i>2. Gegen den Ehrgeiz der Geschäftemacher hat er gekämpft, und gegen jede Lüge, den Frauen, Kindern eignen Wert gegeben, aber die stolz und hart sind, abgewiesen.</i></p> <p><i>Ertrug mit uns das Kreuz all unserer Schmerzen und litt wie wir die Qual all unsrer Übel, war selbst bereit, der Menschen Schuld zu teilen, um so den Tod für immer zu besiegen.</i></p>
--	---	---

The congregation leaves the celebration space in silence.

ELM Online Seminar: “How Does the World Look at Holy Week and Easter?” A Service for Good Friday

Thanks to

We would like to thank Pastor Dr. Soraya Heinrich-Eberle for her presentation for our online seminar “Best Practices from Across the Globe.”

Dr. Soraya Heinrich-Eberle is both a church musician and a doctor of theology and is a member of the Evangelical Church Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB); she currently lives with her family in Honduras.

Further Information

You can find more interesting events, information about the ELM, and the opportunity to support our work financially on our homepage: www.elm-mission.net.

More resources from the Online Seminar: www.elm-mission.net/en/ressources-holy-week-easter.

Contact

You are also welcome to contact us directly: Bradn Buerkle, Secretary Theological Education in International Church Partnerships: b.buerkle@elm-mission.net, T +49 (0)5052 69-293.

Indra Grasekamp, Secretary Global Spirituality: i.grasekamp@elm-mission.net, T +49 (0)5052 69-234.



ELM Hermannsburg
Partner in Mission