

**A Sermon for Good Friday  
April 3, 2026**



*The Erection of the Cross, by Gustave Dore*

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[Good Friday – The Episcopal Church](#)

John 18:28 – 19:42

## The New Community

This past week, Tuesday, would have been the feast day of the great poet and churchman John Donne. I say “would have been,” because Holy Week erases the observances of individual saints. However, I like John Donne and I presented him to our Wednesday group for commemoration. Today, Good Friday, I bring you, too, some of his wisdom.

John Donne was a famous 17<sup>th</sup> century poet, a metaphysical poet who often wrote in startling images, such as his poem to the Trinity: “Batter my heart, three-person’d God!” He had a somewhat profligate early life which is reflected in his early poetry, but as he matured, he brought the world some wonderful insight. He was ordained priest and was renowned as a great preacher while he was dean of Saint Paul’s Cathedral in London. Here is a part of one of his meditations:

*No man is an island, entire of it selfe;  
Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the maine;  
If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the lesse,  
As well as if a promontorie were, as well as if a mannor of thy friends  
or of thine owne were;*

This image is well-known because it speaks of a deep truth: none of us can be alone. We all need each other.

As Jesus hangs on the cross, he brings together the first Christian community: his mother and his beloved disciple. He knows that they need each other, in sorrow and in future joy. He tells his beloved disciple John that Mary is John’s mother, too. He tells Mary that John is her son too. This is a new coming together, fashioned by Christ himself.

Recently in our parish, a very active member had an accident and was taken temporarily out of our midst. As she continues to heal and gain strength, we are reminded that our community is diminished by the absence of any one of us.

Back about 65 years ago when I was in high school, I was a member of the high school chorus. Our wise chorus director chose beautiful pieces for us to sing, and many of the lyrics have stuck with me throughout my life. The John Donne poem that I mentioned was one of those texts, updated somewhat, but it has really stuck with me all this time. Allow me to sing some of it to you:

*No man is an island.  
No man stands alone.  
Each man’s joy is joy to me  
Each man’s grief is my own.*

This intimate description of community is strengthened by the last sentence of Donne’s meditation, which may be familiar to you in its description of death.

*Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.  
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls: It tolls for thee.*

Yes, we are diminished by the death of one of our own, and we are all in this together. We too will leave this community, will leave our families and friends.

But when we leave, we will have had an impact on everyone else. God's gift of community continues. Jesus' new community was built of his mother and his friend, the Beloved Disciple. Many other communities came together, to tell each other and the world about the glorious promises of God in Christ. This story never ends. Even as Jesus left his earthly life, he invited all of us into an ever widening experience of life eternal. God's eternity is now, and it continues forever.