

Friday Black, Friday Good by Philip Hyne

She took this naked child of hers
once more upon her lap and,
as on the day when he was born,
blood stained her dress.
But thirty-three years had passed since then
and, where once this scrap of life –
her joy, her beloved firstborn son –
had gulped his first life-giving breath,
he now had already gasped his last,
meeting death not as an enemy but
as a welcome friend who freed him
from the agony of the cross.

Those baby hands she'd held in hers,
clinging fingers tipped with tiny, wondrous nails,
were ragged now from nails of iron;
the brow she once had kissed so tenderly
was scarred by bloodied thorn.
But she did not weep:
she had cried out her grief to numbness
while he hung upon the air, and now
she could only sit, silent in her anguish,
utterly bereft.

Gently they took him from her, bathed him,
laid him in the winding sheet, and carried
his ravaged body into the coolness of the tomb,
where he might rest 'til Shabbat¹ passed.
Only then might they bless his body
with sweet embalming spice,
not realising they would be forestalled in
this, their one last loving act of grace.

So ended Friday but, while all the world
turned away in agonised dismay,
God's finger, reaching out, turned
Friday Black to Friday Good: using the power
that once had tossed a universe upon the
blackness of eternity to bring light and life,
so now the world's true Light was brought to
resurrection Life, to bring hope and joy anew
to those he claimed to be his own:
God's children.

¹: the Sabbath [Saturday]