

Good Friday

- According to the Gospel story, those who passed before Jesus crucified on the hill of Golgotha jeered at him & mocking his helplessness said to him: *"If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross"*.
- Jesus didn't react to the provocation - his answer is a silence charged with mystery.
- Precisely because he is the Son of God, he remains on the cross even unto death. So some questions are inevitable.
- How is it possible for a God to be crucified by people, his supposed creatures?
- Do we realize what we are saying? What is God doing on a cross?
- How can a religion based on such an absurd notion of God survive?
- For us as Catholics, it is not an empty Cross, but the crucifix – the dead Christ on the wood of a cross that becomes the source of God's power in the resurrection & the dead wood becomes the tree of life.
- It's interesting that in the first years of Christianity, the focus was on the resurrection because this is what the followers of Christ powerfully experienced – the real presence & activity among them of the risen Christ; in the ancient Church, the symbol of Christians was almost anything other than the cross.
- It was hard to make sense of the Cross as it is for us today.
- It was considered scandalous by the Jews who were looking for signs of the power of God, to consider a Messiah who was a failure & killed as a criminal by the leadership of the country.
- And it was considered utter stupidity by the Greeks that God would stoop to the level of humans & seem to have failed in his mission.
- I think we have the same problems – how can power be expressed through what only seems weakness & failure, & surely, an all-powerful God couldn't be overcome by evil, but would rather overthrow it.
- But the Cross reveals a wisdom of God that we find difficult to understand.
- The Cross reveals firstly the lengths to which God goes to make known to us his great love – a love that is not aloof & from above, but a love that brings God into solidarity with all the suffering, pain & failure that is part of human life.
- Through the Cross of Christ, God is with us & feels our pain as a human being; but the Cross also exposes the reality of human sin & evil.
- The Cross of Christ exposes what the world hides from itself – the insane blindness of human self-centredness that seeks to eliminate & kill what is good & loving & beautiful.
- A crucified God amounts to a revolution & a scandal that obliges us to revise our ideas of a God whom we supposedly know.

- A crucified God has neither the appearance nor the characteristics that all religions attribute to the Supreme Being.
- A crucified God is not an all-powerful majestic being, unchangeable & happy, a stranger to our sufferings, but a helpless & humiliated God who suffers pain, anguish & even death with us.
- Faced with the cross, we either renounce our faith in God or we open our minds to a new & amazing understanding of a God incarnate in our suffering who loves us with a love we will never comprehend.
- As we look upon the crucified One, we begin to sense that God, in his mysterious depths, is someone who suffers with us.
- Our miseries move him. Our sufferings affect him.
- God is not one who lives, so to say, untouched by our sorrows, tears & misfortunes; God is there at every crucifixion, in every violent death, in every war, in every unjust torment in this world.
- This crucified God does not admit of a frivolous, selfish faith in an all powerful God who serves our whims & fancies.
- This God forces us to face the suffering, neglect & abandonment of so many victims of injustice & misfortunes - the crucified ones in our own time.
- This is the God we will meet whenever we come close to anyone who is crucified in any way.
- Christians will continue to skirt the issue of being faced with a crucified God.
- We have even learned to look up to the cross of the Lord to avoid looking at those crucified in our own time before our very eyes.
- However, to celebrate the Passion of the Lord in a true spirit we must rekindle our compassion.
- Without this compassion, our faith in the crucified God will run the risk of being false & irrelevant to life.
- The task of Christians is to enter into the way of life of Jesus by challenging the structures of sin & injustice, of all that is wrong in society, & by standing on the side of the poor & oppressed & all who suffer.
- May Christ's death on the Cross make sense of the ways we're called to die to our short-sighted self-centredness & become passionate about life lived more deeply.
- When we venerate the cross, let our eyes be fixed on all those close to us, or far away from us, who suffer a variety of crucifixions.