

TRINITY NEWS

Christ the King at the Cross of Calvary

Luke 23:26-43

The procession makes its way down what we now call the Via Dolorosa. The original street is buried deep beneath, or it may be blocks away, but for us this is the *Via Dolorosa*, "the way of sorrows". I have carried a wooden cross down that winding street en route to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is an experience not easily forgotten. Christianity developed the Stations of the Cross out of this procession of Jesus to the place of his execution. It is like life's procession in that it inevitably requires a death scene. But the time and place for this death has been construed beforehand by those who did not know that they were rehearsing matters already held in the memory of God.

There are women who weep for the luminous person who carries the *patibulum*, the cross bar of the crucifix which will sustain his last agonies. Jesus speaks directly to them: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and your children. For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed! Then they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' for if men do these things when the tree is green, what will they do when it is dry?" (Luke 23:28-30).

The tree at Calvary blooms with new life, though death occurs there. The dry tree is an emblem of new life offered and rejected. Real death occurs at the Cross. But the seed of new life is sown in the midst of death, and it is soon displayed in signs of new life overcoming death, vindicated in resurrection. The saving work of Christ at the Cross is best interpreted in Scriptural terms: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (I Peter 2:21).

Some people came to Calvary to see their scheming against Jesus coming to its ultimate fruition. There are those who are visiting Jerusalem at Passover for whom this is spectacle of another person's humiliation. There are those who are

disturbed by the distress of another. There are those who are locked into their own passing moments. There are those who see in the suffering figure a mirror of their own inner and outer hurts; there are those who are not involved at all, who do not care one way or another. There are others who hate him for being strange, difficult, and an enormous challenge to their current belief system and counter to the sensation of power that it gives them. "Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' And they divided up his clothes by casting lots (Luke 23:32). These words are set in the immediate context of the actions that actually crucify him.

The prophet Jesus of Nazareth is crucified. He is fastened to the *patibulum* and lifted aloft. The *patibulum* is fixed to the upright already rammed into the earth. His robe had been ripped from him and his naked body is suspended in the air and in time.

The scene at the cross is one of unrelieved sordidness. It is of a man dying there, with a small crowd with a variety of motives for being there as the witnesses. He has alongside him two thieves, hardly gracious company for the purported Saviour of the world. One of them shows some recognition of the central figure and he is known for his words: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." This is a figure of repentance, whereas the other thief rails against Jesus and against life itself. He is bitter about the matters that have caused his execution and his anger is raw and abrupt.

The repentant criminal receives assurance: "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

Darkness comes at times other than night. The night watches have always been tough for the lonely, the ill, the dying, and those with aching hearts. Darkness can invade daylight hours during an eclipse of the sun, and it came at Noon to the scene at Calvary. This cloud of darkness had to be penetrated as much as the darkness at Creation. The symbol of that penetration and indeed assimilation is the tearing in two of the veil of the Temple at the time of Jesus' death.

It is utterly real, this death, like all deaths, and yet the veil between heaven and earth does move aside. The lifeless body of the Saviour will be raised, his *nephesh*, his "life in the body", his "absolute sense of identity" is regained, and the awesome defeat of death is ratified. The Good Friday World of suffering and death goes on, but there is light in the darkness and the Light of the world illuminates the darkness with unquenchable light. **Awareness is everything with Resurrection, which is seeing humanity through the eyes of God.**
Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Monday.

- ◆ Finance meeting, 5:30pm, Parish office
- ◆ Vestry meeting, 6:30pm, Rectory

Wednesday.

- ◆ Group discussion, 7:30pm, Rectory

Thursday.

- ◆ Thanksgiving Service & Dinner, 7:00pm.
(Tickets are still available at the Parish office)

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:

Isaiah 2:1-5
Psalm 122
Romans 13:8-14
Matthew 24:37-44

