

Good Friday

On this day of the Lord's death we attempt something beyond our powers as human. We try to enter into the mind of God. Every year I'm forced to acknowledge that my mind soon falls into helplessness. It isn't because I don't understand, as if I were totally foxed by what happens on this day. Rather there is *too much* to take in, and the consequences of what I *do* understand are so awesome, that they throw all my other understanding into confusion.

How can the eternal Son of God suffer like this? How can we make him suffer like this? What does it say about the way we are, and the way we live, that the coming of God to be with us should end like this? It's no accident; it was intentional and decided upon by everyone. Above and beyond all of us, it was decreed by God, the cup he gives Jesus to drink.

If this is what we do to the Son of God, **what are we doing to one another** all the time, perhaps without knowing it: are we really this murdering, refusing, hateful humanity that condemns and crucifies the innocent? Today the human race passes judgment on itself and executes its condemnation.

But his very presence here on the earth, his willingness to live where such a fate greets him, tells us everything about God. **If he had not come**, he would have spared us this shameful revelation of our evil. But then we should have remained, lost in the maze of our nature and the half-life he found us living, and the entrance into the Eternal would have remained closed in us.

So **he came from the glory of God**, and entered the world humbly, and waited for the hour when his nature as God would be disclosed. The Gospel shows us his baptism, and the transfiguration, and the miracles, which serve as clues to his nature. Life streams from him to the deaf and the blind humanity that he meets, and he loves them and knows them thoroughly and gives them all he has. He calls us to live like him, in complete obedience to God; he calls us to a strange feast made up of the weak and dishonoured, rejected and condemned. He shows us that life is offered to the helpless - not just to make sound human beings, but to be people in whom the door to the eternal is opening. His own prayer was as much of a sign to us as anything he did for us. (By the end of the Passion it is only prayer that is left to him.)

Having opened the eyes and ears and hearts of so many, **his last task was to open death itself to the divine mystery**. And here there is a surprise, which is one of the moments where my mind loses its grip: just as he could draw close to disabled and sinful people, while the holy and wholesome remained a no-go area, so he finds in death a meaning he can't explain to the living disciples. This Lent we've meditated on the nature of God's Son as one who lives by pouring himself out to the Father. Now he can do *in his human body* what he does in his eternal life in the Trinity: he can pour himself out completely in love and obedience and trust, *to no-one but the Father* - because, as Mark showed us last Sunday in his Passion - *no-one on earth would have him*. That he does this in a human body means his death; but it isn't the shameful death Caiaphas thinks it is, or the accidental death Pilate thinks it is. It is what the eternal self-gift of Son to Father looks like in human shape. It is quite literally a breath-taking act of love, where he gives everything he has to the Father. "*It is accomplished!*"

But there's a last note. See what John says of his dying: **He yielded up the Spirit**. His last breath represents his whole life. It is the breathing into the atmosphere of our earth the living Spirit who is God. To the degree that we can go with him to the Cross, something life-changing happens to us. From henceforth the air we breathe is God's air, and the gift of Father and Son together. From his pierced side flow **the water of Christian Baptism** into

this death which we now share with him, and the last of **his blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins and the everlasting Covenant**. The *totality* of it tells us of God. The *finality* of it tells us about his covenant with us. He has nothing left to give us: not because he has lost everything, but because he has given us all he has, and everything we need.

To those who would receive him, he gave power to be children of God.