

## **Standing and waiting at the foot of the Cross**

We come to the foot of the Cross today under very exceptional circumstances. The events that we know so well are somehow more poignant as we separately come and see Jesus dying on the cross for each and every one of us.

Looking up we see Pilate's sign INRI Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. Below we see Jesus with a crown of the sharp thorns pushing into his head. It was the Thorn bush that was a symbol of Israel as a nation. Somehow Jesus turns this moment of humiliation into a moment of glory. He knew who he was, "in Jesus we see one who for a short while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because in tasting death he should stand for us all." He had emptied himself of all but love. The cross has become the sign of God's unconditional love for us.

The cross itself was a symbol of humiliation, the form of execution reserved for the lowest of criminals. We know from the other synoptic gospels that he was crucified with two others who were criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Jesus said, 'Father forgive them; for they know not what they are doing.' From the God flows Forgiveness for all. Love is the very essence of the Trinity.

Standing near the foot of the cross of Jesus are Mary his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Jesus had emptied himself of all but love. So when, in the midst of his suffering, he sees his mother and his disciple, John, standing not far away, in this desperate situation he feels compassion for them. Out of his compassion Jesus commands him to look after her and for them to develop a surrogate mother son relationship. Jesus wanted to make sure that his Mother and his earthly family would be looked after when he was gone. All our relationships need to be based on love and for us as Christians they should be built on the example of unconditional love shown by Christ on the Cross. This love was reflected in the actions of his early disciples. Is there someone we know who needs to experience God's unconditional love?

Let us not be afraid of drawing near to the cross, to witness Christ's Suffering and his love and compassion, for as we draw near he is able to help us, meeting our needs and those around us.

Knowing that he had accomplished everything that his Father has asked him to do he declares "it is Finished". In Gethsemane, Jesus had prayed that this cup might pass from him, but he was prepared to accept the will of the Father and to complete the work which has led to this moment.

Of course to those who witnessed this moment there was the devastating grief of losing the one they loved. But the joy of Easter Day was not far away, when we, like they can proclaim "he is risen, he is risen indeed". (527)