

As we begin Holy Week, the reading of the Passion brings home to us once again the historical foundation of our faith, because when we read the account of the Passion, we are once again confronted with the fact that our faith is centered around someone who lived and died at a particular time and in a particular place. Our faith is all about Jesus of Nazareth who lived two thousand years ago in what is today Israel and was crucified there as a rabble-rouser, a criminal, by the superpower of the day, the Roman Empire. We hear again the story of his betrayal by one of his closest followers, his arrest, his torture, his condemnation to death and his death.

Ideas are powerful, we know. We have the adage that the pen is mightier than the sword, and that means that ultimately a writer's thoughts prove to be more influential than weapons. But when a person lives an idea and thereby gives it body, give its flesh and blood, which is what the word to incarnate means, ideas and thoughts achieve their ultimate power.

And that is what we have in Jesus. He is the love of God given body and blood, the incarnate love of God. And look what happens to God's incarnate love: it is crucified, or, to speak more accurately, he is crucified. What a mystery—that we humans reject love incarnate.

There are many other thoughts, and thoughts of a very concrete nature, which can present themselves to us as consequences of this foundational thought, that divine love made flesh and blood found rejection. But for the moment let us leave them to each of us to pursue individually. It is enough for us as a group today to remain fixed on this one thought, that divine love became flesh and blood in a man named Jesus of Nazareth in the Roman province of Palestine two thousand years ago and was rejected.