

Palm Sunday, 2009

As we begin Holy Week, the reading of the Passion brings home to us once again 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. The pen is mightier than the sword, we say, 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, gives it flesh and blood, which is what the word to incarnate means, ideas and thoughts achieve their ultimate power.

That is what we see in Jesus. He is the idea 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 present themselves to us as we look at the crucified Jesus. But for the moment let us concentrate on this one thought: 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. Why? Why do people prefer darkness to light? Because, John's Gospel tells us, their deeds are evil and they therefore shun the light.

Let us pray for ourselves and our loved ones that we may allow the light of God's love now present among us to shine in our minds and hearts, and in the deeds of our daily lives. Or, to put it concretely and in familiar words, let us pray that we will see him more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly day by day.