

Good Friday March 25, 2016

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What we celebrate today, in Good Friday, is a historical reality and a truth clarified and seen beautifully through the eyes of faith: that Jesus from Nazareth, the son of Mary, a carpenter who became a “rabbi”, teacher, a healer, and a prophet, was executed upon a “cross”: a large wooden beam upon a high hill – so that everyone could see. It was a way of mocking criminals, those found guilty in the eyes of the law and the people. Even the “sign” posted above his head on the cross was a mocking of him by Pilate and the centurions, no statement of faith at all from them: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews” – as we see it here “INRI.” But we know what it means: and his identification with a Kingship and an alliance with God whom he referred to as a “Father” hastened his passion and his death upon this cross.

The reason we venerate a cross today, a “Crucifix” here, is because this symbol has taken a deep, very personal meaning for us. Most if not all of us have a crucifix (or a cross) hanging in our family rooms; or perhaps we wear one around our necks on a necklace. And many of us carry a “cross” in our pockets as we carry a rosary with us. It is more than just “good luck” or some kind of superstitious belief. It is deeply personal: because we have come to know the “Person” who hung upon it.

This is the spirit in which we venerate the cross today. I once was asked by a young person: “*Why do we do that? Isn't that like worshiping a cross?*” My response was that we do not worship the cross, we venerate it: but our kiss of it represents the love and worship we have for Jesus himself. We worship him who we do not see here today, but is very present with us, in prayer, and especially as we receive Communion as well. So: let us love Jesus with a kiss of his Cross today, and live this love when we depart from here. To quote the late Christian musician, Rich Mullins, in his song “Creed,” which is a song based on the Apostles Creed and everything we believe as Christians:

“I believe what I believe: it’s what makes me what I am

I did not make it, no: it is making me;

I did not make it, no it is making me;

I did not make it, no it is making me-

It is the very truth of God – not the invention of any man-”