

A Reflection on the Passion of Jesus and HIV

Marginalised, misunderstood, abandoned: this pretty much defines the status of Jesus hanging on the Cross – in a place of public execution; the focus of public disgrace.

A scandal to all, especially the self-righteous, and total foolishness to the clever and sophisticated.

No wonder, that in agonising anticipation of what was to happen, Jesus asked his friends to keep awake with him, for support.

And He prayed to God his Father in heaven that if it were possible, not to have to drink from this chalice of unimaginable vilification, pain, suffering and shame!

Wouldn't any of us do the same?

Yet Jesus said, "not my will but your will be done."

The hill of Calvary is the ultimate Site of Suffering.

Yet God so loved the world that to bring all of us to himself, in Jesus, he willingly underwent such torment, to show us the depth of his love for us and for all people.

He became as we are, so that we may become as he is.

At Calvary – the Site of the greatest manifestation of God's love for us.

In this epicentre of desolation, failure and powerlessness, Jesus reveals his nearness to everyone who is considered the least among women and men; and at the same time his one-ness with God his Father.

Jesus did not count his equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, and became one of us, to serve and to love – and by example Jesus teaches us to do the same.

Paradoxically, this domain of utter destitution, this Site of Stigma and Suffering is also the Site of Transformation.

It is the site where Jesus gives Mary his mother into the care of the Beloved disciple, John; and John is given to Mary as her son, whereby the nature of family is transformed and universalised.

At the site of suffering the people are also transformed: those who came to mock go away beating their breast in sorrow, whilst the officer in charge of the execution of Jesus, when he sees how Jesus suffered and died proclaims; this certainly was the Son of God!

Those who were afraid before, now go to Pilate the Roman governor. Boldly they ask for the body of Jesus so that they can at least give him a decent burial. It took courage, for they knew that they would be counted as guilty, by their association with Jesus the criminal.

We have here a microcosm of what the Christian Community is called to be. Solidarity is not an option; it is an imperative!

Let us be inspired and energised by the living memory of the Passion of Jesus Christ, as it continues today. Let us take action with the crucified ones of today on a crucified earth.

For this is our faith. This is Christ who comes to us, often poor and in need, and asks that we love him and serve him.

Let us share in the joys and sufferings of our sisters and brothers, especially those who are marginalised, stigmatised and rejected. Amen.

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