

2013 Lent and Passiontide: Sunday 3 March, 5.45pm

In nomine...

How does the Cross change our lives?

Choice. Jesus went to the cross willingly. He wasn't forced to go to Jerusalem. He wasn't forced to go to the Mount of Olives. He knew what was coming to him, and he embraced it. Yes, he wrangled with it: he prayed hard in that garden, but dared allow his choice to be his Father's choice. He wasn't a victim.

Sounds odd, perhaps. Especially in a world where we think so much about victims. So-and-so has hurt me: I am a victim. So-and-so is poor: she is a victim. So-and-so is ill: he is a victim. But the cross teaches us that we can, by the power of God, open our arms to embrace difficulties, strife, all that the world throws at us. Jesus was no victim: we are challenged to think about where we wallow in victimhood and where we paralyse others by labelling them as victims, and where instead we can dare to make different choices that may be more in line with God's will for us and our world.

Did God really *want* Jesus to suffer and to be crucified? No. The Cross changes our lives in another way. It reveals God. Not as a son-torturing wrathful being needing appeasing. But rather as a God who, all-loving and all-powerful, chooses to limit himself. There's a Greek word, *kenosis*, which is the understanding that God literally emptied himself, that he has chosen to be limited so as to come alongside us, human beings, the object of his love. To pour himself out as a human being, a mortal capable of suffering and dying. Someone who *can die for us*.

That's not to say that because Jesus died for us on the cross, we won't die. Of course we will. Lent is as good a time as any to think about our mortality, about how by living well in our present moment we might hope in our time also to die well. Again, it's about embracing life, opening our arms to receive what life wants to throw at us, good or bad. We will yet die.

But those words just now of the creed set by Lotti, that *He was crucified for us*, mean that the Son of God suffered and died, as a mortal. He came among us, within us, so that by him dying with us, we might live with him. He died that we might live. A cosmic interchange between God and man.

God limits himself, he joins us fully in our mortality, our death, our humanity. And by that means we are invited to join him fully in the life that goes beyond death, in the eternal love that is the divine image which is in each one of us. An interchange of where we are, who we are, the world we live in. Something so cosmic that the sky is altered, the world is changed.

The Cross changes our world, the relationship of God and man, it sets free the divine spark within each one of us. We all have a choice to make, to make afresh every moment: a choice to seek ever more closely the God who is not victim, but freely-self-giving in love. A choice that changes our lives, our communities, our world.