

What's the point? What is the sense in all this suffering? What's the point of Jesus crucifixion?

It was but 5 months ago that we so joyfully hailed his birth at Christmas, rejoicing in his coming to us, marveling at him so beautifully depicted in paintings as a baby boy soft, clean, and gentle, surrounded by adoring angels and shepherds and kings. And today we witness him bloody, bruised, and broken, hanging from a tree. What's the point?

To understand the point we need to remember this: we cannot divorce Christmas and Easter, his birth and his death. He came to us on that first Christmas night in order to enter our human experience, our human existence. He came so that God's word, his life and truth could touch and elevate and heal all those good and beautiful things we celebrate at Christmas: family, friends, life, feasting. He came at Christmas so that we could say, 'God knows what it is to be born into a family, to grow up, to learn, to eat and drink, and to live a human life.'

He comes today, bloody, bruised, and broken for exactly the same reasons. There is much darkness in our world, in our families, our homes, our lives; there is much sadness and grief, anxiety and betrayal, confusion and abandonment. And it is so easy for us in the midst of these trials, these darkneses to think: 'God doesn't know. He doesn't understand. He has abandoned me.' We identify very easily with the cry of Jesus: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

But when we think like this we miss the very point of the Cross. Just as Jesus came at Christmas to enter into the good things of human existence, so now, today, on the Cross, he enters into the bad things, the black things, the depth of our limitations and weaknesses. Indeed he enters into that most final of separations and loss: death. He really dies. And he does it all so that we can no longer say: 'My God, my God, why

have you forsaken me?’ No, Jesus, in the midst of his suffering repeats this cry: ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’, and through his death cancels it out. God has not forsaken us; he has not abandoned us. He has come and felt and literally experienced all the wickedness and evil, all the pain and loneliness and isolation of our human lives.

Indeed all our sufferings and sins can be seen in the Cross. Have you ever been betrayed? Jesus was, with a kiss. Have you ever been unjustly accused? Jesus was. Have you ever been abandoned by your own friends and family? Jesus was. Have you ever had to endure pain of body and soul that you didn’t ask for? Jesus did. Have you felt the pain and loss of death? Jesus has.

See the point of the Cross is that Jesus, God, takes on all of the darkness and brokenness and evil of human existence, he absorbs it, and takes it down into the tomb with him, there to bury it, there to take away its power, its sting, its victory.

Do not feel, do not think that in the midst of your own trials that God has forsaken you. Jesus today has gone up on the Cross and into the tomb with you, for you. You are never alone even in the darkest of days.

But know this too: the Cross and the tomb are not the end of the story. Today God lets all the bad things of human existence, all the wicked and evil things have their say. Tomorrow night at the Easter Vigil, in the darkness of the night and from the darkness of the tomb, he will make his great reply. Let us be there to hear it, to see it, to experience its effects. In reply to the darkness thrown against him, taken on by him God has a word of light to offer us. Let us come tomorrow or on Sunday to hear it.