

## The Cross: God's Loving Wisdom

It seems very odd indeed for us to celebrate the Triumph of the Cross. What triumph?

In fact the cross is offensive, a powerful symbol of the depth of our inhumanity. It exposes our human capacity to inflict pain, suffering, contempt, and cruelty upon one another. Above all, the cross on which Jesus was most painfully executed represents a gross travesty of justice because he was a totally innocent victim of political expediency and religious malice.

So where is the victory when the cross appears to represent the triumph of evil and exposes the very dark side of our inhumanity?

It is here that the cross in God's hands is revealed as the *ultimate sign of contradiction*. Through it God issues the most potent and direct challenge to us – about our values, and about the way we organise our lives around them. Through the cross, God uncompromisingly wants to turn our world, and our lives, upside down.

Where we are so easily seduced by the glamour, accumulation, and trappings of power in all its forms, the crucified Jesus reveals God's total opposition to them. The Crucified Jesus reveals completely who God really is, namely, that God loves our broken and sinful humanity. That love is so total and unconditional that God became one of us in Jesus.

St Paul put it beautifully when he wrote in today's Word that God chose to empty Himself in order to become one of us, and take the form of a Servant. In Jesus, God freely chose to become the Powerless One. In Jesus Crucified, the cross revealed that God would rather take violence upon Himself, than inflict violence and punishment upon sinful humanity.

The cross in the hands of the powerful and dominant corrupts, hurts and destroys. But the very same instrument in God's hands heals and redeems. Through the cross, God showed that He stands with those who suffer under the weight and abuse of power. The cross ultimately reveals the victory of love and non-violence over power. It is truly the victory and wisdom of God.

Throughout religious history and in current times, an enormous amount of evil and violence has been committed in God's name. God in the Crucified One rejects this. No violence can ever be justified in God's name. The Church in recent times has come to appreciate this a lot better.

Towards the end of his pontificate, John Paul II apologized for the religious excesses of the Catholic Church's past where much evil was done in the name of religious orthodoxy.

St Paul himself was a zealous practitioner of religious violence. It was only after his own conversion that he began to see that what he had done before was wrong. He then switched to preaching the Crucified One. "To those who are perishing, the cross is folly, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God" (1Corinthians 1:18)

The cross is really the sign of hope, of life, of reconciliation, of love, and of healing. It is the power and wisdom of God. Look upon the Crucified One and be healed. We can indeed celebrate the triumph of the cross.