

Who or What is Responsible for Jesus' Death? There is plenty of guilt to go around. The Passion Narratives of all four evangelists **focus on the part the disciples played.** They represent not only human nature, but human nature as it battles with Christian belief. We see, reflected in this story, our own failures to reconcile our Christian faith with the world in which we live. We, I suggest have all switched sides in one-way or another at some point. Have you ever agreed to something, that in your heart you knew was wrong or it compromised your principles, but because it was the safe thing to do – for your boss, your job, for the extra money, or for a promotion you did it anyway? If you have, then you are there in the streets – yelling "crucify him, crucify him."

Palm Sunday involves Christians on a journey, uncomfortable though it may be. **We have to arrive at the cross in order to get beyond it.**

After all suspended on its cross beams is the greatest claim in history; a crucified carpenter claiming to be God on Earth. Divine. Eternal. On many levels, this week should bring us face to face with the cross; it is at the very heart of our faith. We need to see it unadorned, naked, bloody and not gold-plated.

Henri Nouwen tells a disturbing story about a family he knew in Paraguay. The father, a doctor, was active in protests against the military.

He spoke out repeatedly against its human rights abuses. Local police took their revenge by arresting his teenage son and torturing him until he was dead. It was a horrible crime. Townsfolk wanted to turn the funeral into a huge protest march. But the doctor chose another means of protest.

The father displayed his son's body in the local church. However, he was not dressed in a fine suit. And the funeral director applied no make-up. The father displayed his son as he had found him in the jail. The son was naked, his body marked with scars from the electric shocks and cigarette burns and beatings. It did not lie in a coffin but on the blood-soaked mattress from the jail. It was the strongest protest imaginable, for it put injustice on grotesque display. This, for me, is reminiscent of Fr.

Mykal Judge the Franciscan Priest and NYFD Chaplain killed when the south tower collapsed. At 9:59 AM, that morning debris went flying through the north tower lobby, killing many inside, including Judge. At the moment he was struck and killed, Judge was repeatedly praying aloud, "Jesus, please end this right now! God please end this!" His broken body was then carried and laid on the Altar of Trinity Church nearby.

How powerful these scenes must have been, the love of a father poured out unadorned for a murdered son, and a priest rushing to aid the dead and

dying and overcome by the unfolding scene. The cross is held together by this same love and passion.

Jesus hangs there naked and unadorned. In reverence of Christ, paintings show him with a loin cloth, but that was not the practice for crucifixion. The condemned man hung there naked. The execution was always carried out publicly, which enhanced the humiliation. God watches; His heart must have broken, but His point is made. The promised is fulfilled and reverberates through the heavens. So where does this leave us – a people who run? It leaves us in love. In the love of God – a love that is not of this world, a love that never switches sides. It is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow; it was that love held Jesus on the cross. A purer love does not exist in humanity. We didn't deserve it then; we don't deserve it now His Passion speaks of an amazing love, a sacrifice and hope in the presence of an evil that still exists and freely roams throughout our world in violence and oppression. In the last 3500 years there has only been about 230 years of peace.

So what does this week say? It says Jesus would rather go to hell for us than go to heaven without us, and that you can take to the bank. And that single investment in humanity will always be there gaining interest no matter what the Market does.