

Surely God could have saved the world some other way. The violence, bloodshed, and injustice of the crucifixion seem so sad. When a pope dies or a queen passes away in old age, thousands of admirers attend the funeral and their memory lives in the ages of history. Surely Jesus could have died more peacefully among friends more faithful than these.

Surely God could have created the world some other way. The death, sorrow, tragedy, sickness, and fears of this world can make creation look like a bad experiment. Surely God could have created a world more peaceful, where we'd already be redeemed, where Jesus wouldn't have to die at all.

But God chose to make this world and to send this redeemer, it seems, because the whole package reveals how deep God's love really is. The crucifixion of Jesus captures our greatest fears--a painful death, earlier than we'd like, the loss of friends, the failure of justice, the torment of persecution. God took on flesh precisely to face all the fears we face, so we'd never have to wonder, "What if God were one of us?" Presidential candidates may wear a baseball jacket or a t-shirt to show they're one of us. God wore human flesh.

Why did God do it this way? So that when darkness surrounds us, when death is at our door, when we suffer in innocence, when we feel abandoned, Jesus could take our hands onto his scabs, look deep into our eyes and say, "I know. I know what that's like." Only with this world, only with this death could we ever know the love of God.

Good Friday.regis.4.iv.96