

Good Friday

If you're like most believers, you have a crucifix hanging on the wall at home. You may even have one tattooed on your arm. To unbelievers, the image is ridiculous. There on the cross, Jesus appears helpless. Yet a crucifix is one of the most enduring icons in religious history. It fortifies people who feel helpless. Whether they are out of work, deep in debt, struggling in the family, or failing at school, they find in the cross an emblem of compassion. God understands and bears the suffering we endure.

In John's gospel, the cross is something even more, a window disclosing Jesus' power over death. Throughout John's account of the Passion, Jesus is not helpless. He is in control. He entered the garden. He knew everything that was going to happen to him. He called himself by God's own name. He commanded those who arrested him to set the others free. He accepted the cup the Father had given him to drink. When people asked him a question, he asked one in return. He spoke the truth. He dismissed Pilate's power. He stood in a purple robe beneath a crown of thorns. Even his death was not passive, but active. He handed over his spirit, and from his side blood and water flowed out, giving birth to the church. He was not helpless; he was completely in control.

Throughout the forty days of Lent, we probably had our moments out of control: trying to keep the resolutions we made, falling deeper into the sins we promised we'd avoid, losing sight of the purpose for which we were made. Our world can fall apart any time, any day.

When Jesus' world fell apart, he remained in control. We don't have the same powers. When our world falls apart, we lose control, but we do not lose Christ. He remains in power over the forces that beset us, even over death. For that we gaze in perpetual hope upon the cross of Christ.