

We live in disturbing times – and always have. The relative peace of other years can mask the fundamental drama at the heart of all living: whether to live for one's own sake, only – for the sake of one's own family, tribe or nation or even religion, *only* – or for the sake of others, whoever they might be. It's a tough call because it reflects the fundamental drama within each one of us between good and evil. The temptation is to put this divide out there and divide others into those who are good and those who are evil; those we should love and those we should not. Jesus overcomes this binary way of thinking and acting in his pursuit of the Good, of God, at whatever personal cost. In this he personifies Israel's original call to holiness as evidenced by such texts as those from Isaiah which portray Israel as the suffering servant, and echoed in the harrowing Lamentations of Jeremiah which we heard this morning. This isn't suffering necessarily looked for in order to become a sacrificial offering good enough to redeem us but, rather, the sacrifice which unremitting love necessarily provokes in the face of our 'normal' divided selves. It's a witness to what we could be otherwise and, mostly, we don't like what we see. It asks too much.

Without beauty, without majesty (we saw him), no looks to attract our eyes; a thing despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering, a man to make people screen their faces; he was despised and we took no account of him.

Peter reveals this fundamental divide within us when he so spontaneously denies Jesus three times. This is every bit as much of a betrayal as that of Judas – and haunts us all. The question this liturgy leaves us with is, how much of the cross are we truly willing to bear, rather than forever seeking to impose it on others.

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