

## Why The Cross?

Why the cross?

Isn't that the central question of our faith, especially tonight?

Why not a God who simply makes it all better?

Why not some fine philosophy or wise and witty words?

Perhaps there is the cross because God takes who and what we are AS we are.

Perhaps there is the cross because nearly every human life has more than its share of pain, disappointment, and anguish.

Even the lucky ones, who are raised well, marry well, have perfect children, enjoy their jobs, and avoid poverty – even these, the exceptionally few lucky ones, will someday die.

What kind of God can meet us at the ground of our reality, when our reality so often teeters on the edge of the futile, the meaningless??

Only, perhaps, a God who walks not only within our pain, but a God who walks within his own pain too,

The poet captures it:

The other gods were strong; but thou wast weak;  
they rode, but thou didst stumble, to a throne,  
But to our wounds, only God's wounds can speak;  
And not a god has wounds, but thou alone.

## Edward Shelitto

For all of our efforts to spiritualize, to “other-worldlyize” the reality of God, the truth is, “the cross of Jesus belongs completely within the natural world, the world indeed of nature, red in tooth and claw – including human nature.

Who can forget Orwell’s terrible image of a boot stamping on a human face forever, as a summing up of our world?

When we look at the cross and see there the failed hopes and despairing cries of history, we discover the deepest truth.

That the meeting point, of the human with the divine, is not some mountaintop where we stand on tippy toes as God stretches down, if only for a brief moment.

The meeting point between the human and the divine, is the cross.

For the cross is where the downward spiral of human despair – meets the love which was all along at the very heart of creation.

There, in the depths, lives the dearest freshness of the divine, there, among the deep down things.” NT Wright, History and Eschatology, 244-5, modified.

Why the cross?

Because God is intent on having us all.

The abused and the abuser.

The tortured and the torturer.

The good and the bad.

Since even the best of us is a mixture of both.

I'll leave you with this story as you too ponder in your own heart: why the cross?

It's a story told by an old Archbishop in Paris about 3 teenage boys who decide to have some fun one Saturday afternoon.

They go into a church to play a game on the priest, who's hearing confessions.

One by one they take turns in the confessional, confessing outrageous sins they are making up out of whole cloth.

The first two boys run away laughing, but the third boy lingers long enough for the priest to give him a penance.

"Walk up to the great crucifix at the end of the church," the priest tells him, "and, as you look at it, say out loud:

'You did all that for me, and I don't give a damn.'"

Startled, the boy does as he's told.

He stares at the crucifix and says: 'You did all that for me, and I don't give a damn.'

He says it again.

But then, he finds he can't say it a third time.

He leaves the church, changed, humbled, transformed.

The Archbishop telling the story says: "The reason I know this story is — that young man, was me." Id. at 245.

Why the cross?

Why the cross, indeed?

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