

THE CROSS

The center of the Lenten journey is, of course, the cross. We desperately need this focus not only at this time of the year but throughout our lives. I sense that perhaps in the United States we have often overlooked the significance of the cross as we have been quick to want to get to the resurrection. That quickness can be seen in the crosses that we display. Seldom do they have the body of Jesus on them. I find that to be unfortunate. A dying Jesus is at the heart of our understanding of who God is.

I have also found it to be unfortunate that our view of the cross is so centered on the theological conclusion that the early church, and more often, the medieval church, reached about the cross. That conclusion focuses on the cross as somehow a part of God's plan, the way that God dealt with sin. The cross is then a "payment for my sin," God's dealing with God's wrath about the sinfulness of humanity. Jesus is then said to have "paid the price."

There is no doubt but that Jesus paid the price. He paid the price for love. He paid the price for his commitment to the reign and will of God. Jesus was crucified because he was a threat to the political and religious establishment of his time. He would not let go of his commitment to live out God's reign of inclusion of broken, hurting, and sinful people. He became the broken, hurting, and sinful people as he journeyed to the cross and then as he was crucified.

I wish that our reflection on the cross would begin with this understanding. I wish that we would begin "from below," from the experience of Jesus and those who accompanied him. From my perspective, if we begin there we are more likely to come to deeper conclusions about the meaning of the cross for our lives.

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