

No longer I, but Christ who lives within me.

So goes the communion hymn that we will sing at this weekend's Vigil Mass, and as you can see it is a quotation from St Paul's letter to the Galatians which we have this week as our second reading. But the reading goes on to express something more, something which on the face of it sounds very odd. Paul goes on to write: *the life I now live in this body I live in faith: faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.* Paul never knew Jesus of Nazareth in the flesh. As far as we know he never met him, never heard him speak or saw him. So what is Paul getting at when he writes those words and what does it mean for me to say it and to believe it as a Christian?

The experience of being human is a vast canvass on which our horizon can seemingly be limitless. Our ability to understand the world around us continues to expand and develop such that we constantly look to push those limits further and further out, yet we know that we are limited. This limitation lies at the heart of our search for meaning or purpose about our lives. It becomes the question we must confront as we mature and develop. It is a personal question that is addressed directly to me as an individual and it is only in that context as an individual that it can be answered. *But you who do you say I am?* Peter responds *The Christ of God.* Saying and believing that, as Christians do, makes the whole thing very personal. We are so used to saying that Christ died for humankind as a sort of generic definition of his death that when we say that he died for me, his death and by implication the very nature of his death, takes on a whole different dimension.

That Jesus died a violent, brutal death is revealing because it teaches us so much about our humanity. To the heart of the Trinity is where we must go to fathom what is going on here and yet such a journey is impossible for us because we think like man and not like God. To the heart of the Trinity is where we must go to grasp the impartial nature of God, yet such a journey is impossible for us because unlike God we are partial. To the heart of the Trinity is where we must go in order to live in selfless love, but such a journey is impossible for us since we are self obsessed and we love inadequately. Yet the *handing over* of Jesus for me, makes possible a beginning.

This *handing over* commences not with the treachery of one man, but as the Gospel itself describes, from the very *beginning* with the Word and the Word becoming flesh. The path that the incarnate word of God now walks as a human being enables the life of the Trinity in the totality of its impartiality and selfless ever flowing love, to be poured out onto the human landscape. All the characters in the passion from Judas to Caiaphas, from Peter to Pilate, from the crowd to Barabbas, in all that they say and do simply expose our inability to fathom what God is doing. They lay bare our unwillingness to grapple with our partiality and they manifest our negligence to overcome our self obsessive nature.

In the life he lived and in the death he died, Jesus is pouring out the life of the Trinity. He is showing us in human terms, how that life is to be lived. In being totally obedient to the all embracing Trinitarian love, he is being totally obedient to the Father as he had to be. Inevitably it takes him to his death. This is the mystery that we simply cannot grasp and will never come to understand without first coming to stand before the cross.