

Are we prepared to 'let the Lord enter in'?

It is Holy Week once more; how attuned are we to its message? Sadly most of the people we know would regard the events of this week as being somewhat peripheral to their lives and will hardly spare a thought about how close we all stand in relation to them. As we look around and see what is happening in our lives, to ourselves and to our families and friends, does the story which we are about to embark upon resonate with our situations? It is perhaps worth considering some of the peripheral people we meet in the passion narrative and look to see how events in our lives are matched with theirs. I've chosen three who may indeed at first glance seem somewhat peripheral to the story, but who nevertheless allowed the Lord to enter in and change their lives.

Simon of Cyrene has his place in history as the one who was enlisted to carry the cross. It is probable that when his day began, he had no idea that he was going to get caught up in the events of the passion. He would have assumed that he'd just get on with his own business and keep out of harm's way. But providence intervened and his life was changed. Jesus' words about taking up your cross and following him are words which can never be put aside because we don't know how or when the cross will come to us. All we know is that at some point in our lives, we will face the reality of the cross, and when that moment arrives we will be asked, are we prepared to carry it?

We are told that the mother of Zebedee's sons watched from a distance. We met her previously when on behalf of her sons James and John she had asked Jesus to allow them to have seats, one on his left and one on his right when he came into his glory. Now she sees the image of what that request meant. We can all have our own grand schemes and designs but if they are formed out of misplaced pride or arrogance then they are never going to succeed. Perhaps now as she watched from a distance, and saw the cross of Jesus and those of the two criminals either side of his, her mind went back to her request and she understood at last the meaning of Jesus' words that whoever wanted to be great must first become a servant. Can we allow that understanding to fashion our own ambitions?

A Roman soldier, a centurion, guards the scene. Seemingly he is someone who has no insight into the events going on around him. He would have had no connection with Jesus, he was just there doing his job and from his own perspective he was truly a peripheral figure. Yet what he experiences changes him. So many events and experiences, so much innocent suffering impacts on us and it often causes us to raise doubts as to the truth of our faith. But here is man who is actually brought to faith through the mystery of suffering and is able to profess our faith in the clearest of language. Can we let the suffering of Jesus shed a light onto the meaning and purpose of our own sorrow and distress?

We can easily allow this week to feel just like any other and pass us by, or we can make a decision to come and participate fully and openly in the liturgy and allow the Lord to enter into our lives and to draw us in from the periphery. Let us make the choice to come and share in the intimacy of the Upper Room on Thursday, to stand at the foot of the cross on Friday, and to be filled with the joy and hope of the Risen Lord on Saturday. Let us resolve in the words of the psalmist, to 'Let the Lord enter in.'