

Father Tim's time!!

Lent and Holy Week

I have found our observance of the Stations of the Cross particularly inspiring this year, and I hope you have too. For my part, this owes to the fact that the rendering of the Stations we have used does such a nice job blending Christ's passion with the challenges and struggles that we face in our day-to-day lives.

The blending of our lives and Christ's life is so central to our Christian faith that I feel it is sometimes taken for granted. For that reason, as we close out this Lenten season and move into Holy Week, I would like to offer a reminder of this central feature of our faith and tradition.

We all know that in the Incarnation God chose to enter the world as a human being in the person of Jesus. We should allow that fact to sink in a little. I say that because we have so often heard this formula that we are apt to miss the significance of it. But the long and short of it is that God assumed a human form, moved around the world and engaged in all the activities that we engage in. The Gospels report that he ate and drank, loved and was loved, disagreed with some and agreed with others. He took an interest in the lives of those around him, to the point of healing them, weeping over their death. He had *Compassion* (that is he "suffered with") many who he encountered and knew. Indeed, Jesus' *compassion*, his suffering with those around him was a crucial feature—actually *the* crucial feature--of his life and ministry.

Jesus' *compassion*, God's *compassion*, was in fact the motivation for the Incarnation. God desired to fully share in our human experience; to live it from the inside as it were. And that is exactly what he did.

Which brings us to the significance of Lent and Holy Week. We understand that in assuming a human existence, Jesus needed to experience our death as well as our life. But the significance of Lent and Holy Week, and indeed of all the major observances of the Christian calendar, is that by entering directly into human life and death, God also made it possible for us to enter into God's life! If we reflect on it more deeply, we can understand that that's the point. Death cannot prevail over us because it could not prevail over God, and God has now been one of us. And

equally as important, we can join in God's life. During Lent and Holy Week we do this by walking in the way of the Cross. We enter God's life by saying "Yes" to the sacrifices that we are called to make in our life for God's sake. And during this holy time, we can intentionally join God's life by symbolically joining Jesus in the final hours of his life; by being there with him and for him as he suffers with and for us. In other words, we can act compassionately towards Jesus—we can "suffer with" Jesus—by walking the way of the Cross and reflecting on the meaning of his actions for our life.

So, this is the bottom line, and one I hope we—that is, you and I—can remember as we move through Lent and Holy Week, and into the Risen Life. Jesus' life and death, and our life and death, are inextricably blended together. Jesus came to share our life so that we may share in his eternal life. And that begins with his compassion (suffering with) for us and our compassion (suffering with) him.

May we use this season as a way of discovering just how deeply our life and His life are blended. A blessed Holy Week to all of you.