

Mark 15: 16-20

16 Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. ¹⁷And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. ¹⁸And they began saluting him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' ¹⁹They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. ²⁰After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

Meditation: Jesus' dignity continues to be trampled underfoot. It is amazing to contemplate the perverse creativity human beings are capable of when motivated by cruelty. The soldiers first strip Jesus naked. Then they put a purple cloak on him (the colour of kingly royalty). Then they add to this humiliation a crown made of thorns. They salute him as king and then beat him and spit upon him. It is enough to make one weep. Now from what we know about the strategies of oppressive rulers, such humiliation is part of subjugation. It crushes the human spirit and strips the individual of the dignity required in order to resist and revolt. Mockery and beating make prisoners more pliable and compliant for execution. This is a sad commentary on human nature. But it is also sadder when we think that this is what human nature has done and continues to do to the very love of God incarnate.

What this story is also revealing to us, especially emphasized in Mark's gospel account, is that God incarnate walks the journey of those tortured, humiliated and putdown. Thinking about protests today – black racism and Indigenous racism for example, thinking about this month being Pride month and this coming weekend being Pride weekend and the oppression, torture, humiliation and death of so many LGBTQI2S siblings over the past two thousand years in the western world... God is tortured and crucified again and again.

Where are you and I in this story? Am I the tortured or the one who participates in the torturing by how I benefit from this society or carry the privilege of indifference or ignorance of what has happened and continues to happen in many ways visible and invisible?

Prayer: I need your presence with me, O God... and I need your forgiveness too. You are above me, beside me and within me. But I also know I am part of a story and a history where by active behaviour or passive neglect and indifference, I participate in the kind of society that isolates, marginalizes, humiliates and puts down creatures made in your image because of the colour of their skin, their culture, their religion, their sexuality and their gender identity not fitting within the norms. Even as a pandemic isolates us from one another physically in order to survive, the pandemic of racism and other isms isolates us socially when we are excluded and can survive only when we hide who we are. Reveal your presence among those of us who have suffered, O God. Reveal your presence among those of us who need to be further awakened, convicted and shown a path to participation in collective and personal change. All things are possible with you, O God. Give us faith that this is true, even when we have to become the change we pray to see more of in the world; Amen.