

The Cross

The cross is the central symbol of the Christian faith. To the outsider it may seem odd to focus on an instrument of cruel and painful death. But our Lord's crucifixion lies at the very heart of the Christian gospel and of God's saving plan for humanity.

The cross here at St Martin's is a cross of nails, with its own special significance. It reminds us first of all of our link with Coventry Cathedral. We remember the destruction of the cathedral and of that city, and the terrible loss of life in the Second World War. It reminds us of that history we share on a smaller scale here at our own church of St Martin.

The cross of nails also symbolizes our partnership in the worldwide Community of the Cross of Nails. Together we pray and work for peace and reconciliation in a world where there are still wars and conflicts. The scale of destruction and loss of life suffered in Coventry over seventy years ago has been and continues to be repeated in many other parts of the world. Violence continues to be fuelled by misguided ideology, by bigotry, by a lust for power, by raw ambition, by self-centredness, as it has done down the ages. It is just that the means of violence and destruction are so much greater than they ever were.

As so we must never forget that our cross of nails is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus encountered that same fear and desire to hold on to power at any cost that led to his unjust trial and death on a common criminal's cross. Jesus experienced real pain, real isolation, yes even real despair. Yet we believe that it was not simply a man hanging on that cross, but God's own Son, God himself.

And God continues to experience the pain of the world. He does so because of his love for his creation – love shown above all on the cross. Yet the crucifixion has to be seen and understood in the light of the resurrection which we continue to celebrate in this Easter season. For Through the incarnation, death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ God reconciles us to himself, unites us with him.

In the Bible reading we just heard (Luke 9.22-25) Jesus tells his disciples, and us too, that those who wish to be his followers must take up their own cross. That cross may be different for each of us but at its heart it involves our striving to witness to our Lord and to lead our lives following his example. A difficult task, yes, and one we can achieve only with the help of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For it is the cross and resurrection that give us strength and hope.

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