

Second Presentation

Jesus' Passion and Death

Historical Considerations

Major provocations: Jesus' prophetic act in the Temple; Mark: "I am" the Messiah (blasphemy)

Also, his freedom to interpret the Law without recourse to other human authorities: leading the people astray

Jewish leaders and Romans conspired against Jesus and his movement
The Sadducees replace the Pharisees and scribes as his opponents at the end

Only the Romans could execute criminals: the Sanhedrin hands him over.

Who were crucified by the Romans?

Theological Considerations

Jesus' mission was not oriented to a violent death at the hands of others
He was intent on the conversion of Israel to God's latest and definitive gift:
the inbreaking reign of God: huge urgency

He wanted, longed for, acceptance of his message and for *metanoia*,
transformation of consciousness

The Last Supper and the Gethsemane Garden make clear that Jesus is freely
entering into his final hours even if others "will have their way with him";
he will be a victim but not reducible to a victim

The "fittingness" of Jesus' being crucified, given the nature of sin.

On being a victim (in the narrow sense) and developing the identity of a victim (=being defined by one's being a victim)

Not mirroring back to others what they do to him but imitating his Father in the way Abba relates to them; loving the goodness in them to the end

Who Jesus is in the ministry is who he is during the passion and on the cross: the servant of the well-being of others in self-giving love.

Jesus' Relationships during the passion and on Cross (see separate pages)

What Jesus' suffering is not: placating a hostilely angry God, who needs to be reconciled to us (we are the ones who need to be reconciled to God, according to the consistent teaching of the NT)

What Jesus's suffering is not: saving or redemptive all on its own (pain or suffering by itself does no one any good—it's the love in the suffering that holds out the possibility of transformation)

What Jesus' suffering is not: something God positively wanted Jesus to undergo (God, always and everywhere, wants only the ever-increasing flourishing of humankind, including God's Son; God wanted Jesus to love the fleeing disciples and torturing Romans and slandering Jewish leaders to the end)

On the Cross, God's love for us and Jesus' authentic humanity (the full image of God) totally encountered the power of evil at work in the disciples, soldiers and Jewish leaders. That total encounter meant the full defeat of evil as the possible last word about us humans. Evil has reality and power only by distorting goodness (it's parasitic) and by staying in hiding, i.e., staying at a distance from God and authentic humanity.

Jesus' death "causes" our salvation analogous to how sacraments "cause" grace

God did not abandon Jesus on the cross (the resurrection reveals that). What does Jesus' citing the first verse of Ps. 22 mean theologically?

The significance of Holy Saturday for us Christians