

As Christians, we are called to be in the world, but not of the world. Our faith makes us different from the world because it invites us to see the deep realities of events which the world would misunderstand at face value.

Today, we have the opportunity to venerate the cross. The paradoxical nature of this action is lost on us because of the fact that people are not crucified anymore. But if we had been alive in Roman times, the idea of kissing the cross would have been viewed as the height of craziness. Crucifixion was a horrendous form of torture designed to make a public spectacle of hardened criminals. It was literally the worst way to die that humanity had come up with at that point. Imagine what people would think nowadays if we suddenly decided to devote a day to lining up to kiss the electric chair.

But here we are, gathered to kiss the cross. We kiss this instrument of torture because our faith tells us that it is not the last word. We believe that on the cross, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy we heard in the first reading from Isaiah, uttered eight centuries before Jesus' birth:

“...he was pierced for our offenses,  
crushed for our sins;  
upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole,  
by his stripes we were healed.”

We kiss the cross because on it, we believe that Jesus took the punishment for the sins of all, tasting death for the sake of conquering death. As man, he was able to die for each of us; as God, He was able to rise again. This is the good news. As we kiss the cross tonight, let us remember both the ugliness and the beauty of this symbol. It reminds us that each of our sins cost Jesus; that sin destroys us and our loved ones. It also gives us that great hope that when we turn away from those sins, there awaits the One who thirsted for us on the Cross and offers us new life, hope and restoration.