The 5th Wednesday in Lent
Rolling Meadows - 1976

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

ST. MARK 15: 25 "AND IT WAS THE THIRD HOUR, WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED HIM."

It was nine o'clock on Good Friday morning. I imagine that it was probably a FAIR and WARM SPRING MORNING -- with the BIRDS singing in the OLIVE TREES beneath the city wall and the FIRST SPRING FLOWERS springing up in GLORY and PRAISE to their CREATOR. Undoubtedly, JESUS saw once more the WORLD as God had made it -- BEAUTIFUL and FAIR -- a WORLD so far removed from the PAIN and TEARS and BLOOD and HATE with which the PRECESSION came to "GOLGOTHA" -- the "PLACE OF A SKULL."

They began to DIG THE HOLE for the CROSS. The CROSS-PIECES were fitted. JESUS' BODY was laid on the beams. ONE NAIL was hammered home -- then the SECOND -- and the THIRD. His ARMS and FEET were BOUND TIGHT WITH ROPES because the NAILS might not hold the BODY RACKED WITH PAIN. SOLDIERS raised the CROSS upright. There was a DULL THUD as it fell into the hole dug for it. His BLOOD started to flow from His HANDS and FEET. The ACHING, TEARING PAIN of CRUCIFIXION began. "IT WAS THE THIRD HOUR, WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED HIM."

If we are REALLY READY to see the MEANING OF THE CROSS, we must see that the HEART OF MAN is BLACK with EVIL and SIN. Many centuries ago ST. ANSELM said to a young man who had his DOUBTS and MISGIVINGS about the CHRISTIAN GOSPEL: "You have not ~~only~~ yet considered the seriousness of sin." ..... It is true, of course, that our MODERN MINDS do not like

this very much. We feel that, by and large, we are FAIRLY GOOD PEOPLE. Our FRIENDS are FAIRLY GOOD PEOPLE..... People of OTHER RACES and NATIONS may sometimes be BAD -- but NOT WE OURSELVES..... Just this morning over the WALLY PHILIPS' WGN RADIO BROADCAST everybody was lamenting about the YOUNG PEOPLE demonstrating in MADISON, WISCONSIN -- wearing ARTHUR BREMER masks (the man who crippled GOVERNOR WALLACE) and shouting: "Give him another chance." The implication was, of course, that "given a second chance," the next time he will KILL him.

But before you start PASSING THE BUCK, ask yourself: "Are you really RECONCILED with God and the people around you? Are you HUSBANDS and WIVES reconciled with each other? Are you PARENTS and CHILDREN? -- CHILDREN with your PARENTS? Are you RECONCILED with every member of this congregation? Are you RECONCILED with your NEIGHBORS -- the people you WORK WITH? Are you ready to stand up and say that NOBODY ANTANGONIZES YOU or makes you ANGRY?" ..... We may not have MAIMED, or KILLED, or CRUCIFIED anybody -- but we all have had it in our hearts.

What is with this NONSENSE that we must be ready to go with a RELIGION OF HUMANITY? How can any of us THROW OFF A SENSE OF GUILT? Who can trust in the ESSENTIAL GOODNESS OF MANKIND? Who can believe in the OUR OWN POWER TO REMAKE OUR ENVIRONMENT? Who among us can LIFT HIMSELF UP by his OWN BOOTSTRAPS into a NEW AND BETTER WORLD? ..... I can't -- CAN YOU?

Nobody can stand at the FOOT OF THE CROSS and still BELIEVE THESE NOTIONS. The SIN in all of us in NOT REASONABLE, or UNDERSTANDABLE, or COMPREHENDIBLE. Who can RATIONALIZE the CROSS -- the MOB -- GOD HANGING THERE?..... This is NOT a crowd of UNREASONABLE, THOUGHTLESS MEN. This is a MOB OF BAD MEN -- EVIL MEN -- who have come to CRUCIFY THEIR GOD. And EVERYONE OF US STAND WITH THEM!

JESUS had COMMITTED NO CRIME. For THREE YEARS He had been engaged in a TREMENDOUS MISSION of HEALING AND LOVE. He had gone about DOING GOOD..... And yet now they were KILLING HIM! The LAST THING HE SEES before He dies is a MOB OF GRINNING FACES. The LAST THING HE HEARS is a CURSE. The LAST THING HE KNOWS is HATE AND PAIN.

He HANGS THERE -- not because He has to -- but as the Scriptures say: "GOD WAS IN CHRIST RECONCILING THE WORLD UNTO HIMSELF." He HANGS THERE so that we may FINALLY and AT LAST discover that SIN IS ALWAYS HATE. It is HATE OF GOD and MAN. It is the BREAKING DOWN OF ALL FRIENDSHIP and ALL FELLOWSHIP between heaven and earth. It is the separation of GOD FROM MAN and MAN FROM MAN..... THAT IS THE REASON FOR THE CROSS! --, the END of our LONG SEPARATION -- our WANDERING -- our TRANSGRESSION.

THE CROSS MEANS RECONCILIATION! We had a LOVE ONCE -- and we THREW IT OUT THE WINDOW of our BROKEN LIVES. We had a HOME ONCE -- and we TURNED AWAY FROM IT in HATE AND SIN.

We had a FRIEND ONCE -- and we LEFT HIM DIE ON THE CROSS..... The CROSS is the LAST and ULTIMATE EXPRESSION of the DARK TERROR OF OUR SOULS -- the BITTERNESS OF OUR LIVES -- and ALL THE BRUTALITY AND TYRANNY AND INJUSTICE AND GREED which have piled up since PARADISE LOST.

"THEY CRUCIFIED HIM!" Our Lord Jesus Christ is there on the CROSS because HE WANTS TO BE THERE. He wanted to HANG THERE from "THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD" -- to RECONCILE US WITH GOD and WITH ONE ANOTHER. It was NEITHER the NAILS or the NEW ROPES that held Him to His DYING. It was JUST LOVE and NOTHING ELSE!..... This is the MIRACLE and MYSTERY of RECONCILIATION and FORGIVENESS! It is the RESTORATION of FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD and WITH MAN! ..... We LOST A FRIEND -- and HE CAME [redacted] BACK TO [redacted]! us! We LOST A LOVE -- and HE GAVE IT BACK TO US. We LOST A HOME -- and HE BROUGHT IT BACK TO THE DUST WHERE WE MUST LIVE!

Our Lord's CRUCIFIXION means that we can see the TREMENDOUS POWER of the LOVE AND MERCY which broke the DOMINION OF SIN and gave us LIFE and FREEDOM and FORGIVENESS. The CROSS means RECONCILIATION -- with GOD and with ONE ANOTHER. Amen.