

## **Monday, February 20, 2017 - Day 50 – Numbers 4-5, Psalm 41, Mark 15**

As I read today's account of Jesus' crucifixion, I wondered what all those who played a role in it felt that day. There are so many opportunities for Ignatian contemplation here, so many parts in which we can place ourselves in this story.

The religious authorities had been looking for a way to get rid of Jesus. It was a difficult undertaking because there was a group of Jews who believed he was at least a great prophet, if not the Messiah. Those followers would have caused problems for them if they were responsible for Jesus' death.

The Jewish king Herod, who ruled only by fiat of Rome, was insecure in his position. His power and wealth were dependent on keeping peace and making his Roman superiors happy. He didn't want a rabble rouser stirring up rebellion with talk of a Jewish kingdom.

The women were there. They were always there, following Jesus who respected them, taught them, and treated them as disciples, not property.

The Roman soldiers were part of an occupying army in a little country with not much to speak for it in terms of a "Roman" good life. It would have been better to be in Rome, or even one of the Gallic territories. The trials and executions of Jewish rebels gave them something to do.

The thieves on the crosses on either side of Jesus were paying a very high price for their transgressions. They had stolen property, and it was a capital offense.

Poor Simon of Cyrene. In the wrong place at the wrong time, he was drafted to carry the heavy cross up the hill to Golgotha. We don't know if he was a follower of Jesus or not. If we imagine ourselves in his role, we can sense the pain he must have felt as he participated in the crucifixion of this innocent man.

Joseph of Arimathea, a council member, hoped that Jesus might be the Messiah. In offering his tomb for Jesus' burial, he risked offending his fellow council members and the Roman authorities. He had reason to be hesitant to make this offer. What would it mean in his relationships with the Council, to his community status?

Finally, the crowd, the part we play each year in the reading of the Passion story. Instigated by the leaders, the crowd was overtaken by mob mentality. Caught up in a murderous frenzy, they screamed for the death of one they had welcomed with great anticipation the week before. What changed their minds so quickly – unmet expectations, fear that the Romans would increase oppression because of the teaching of this "King of the Jews?" Something happened – some great disillusionment or some great fear.

Soon we will begin the observance of a Holy Lent – a time to ponder our relationship to Christ and our response to his life, death and resurrection. Placing ourselves in the story may be a good way to seek a deeper relationship with Christ.

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