

# Easter mystery: The innocent dies so the guilty live

There's a story told of a small town prosecuting attorney calling his first witness to the stand in a trial. She was an elderly, grandmotherly woman. He approached her and asked: "Mrs. Jones, do you know me?"

She responded: "I've known you since you were a young boy. Frankly, you've been a big disappointment to me. You manipulate people, and talk about them behind their backs. You don't have the brains to admit that you'll never amount to anything."

Not knowing what to do, the lawyer pointed across the room and asked: "Mrs. Jones do you know the defense attorney?"

She replied: "I used to babysit him. He, too, has been a real disappointment. He's lazy, has a drinking problem, and his law practice is one of the shoddiest in the entire state."

At this point the judge rapped the courtroom to silence and called both counselors to the bench. In a very quiet, but firm, voice, he said: "If either of you asks her if she knows me, you'll be jailed for contempt."

While the story is entertaining, isn't it eerily similar to the trial of Jesus? Jesus, from the small town of Nazareth, is being tried in the big city of Jerusalem. The "flawed" judge the flawless. The guilty condemn the innocent. The one with nothing to hide is judged by those with plenty to hide. Ironically in John's Gospel, Jesus, similar to the woman, put Pilate on trial! Pilate is looking for a way out. In the other Gospels Jesus is mostly silent.

There are many morals in the trial of Jesus. Surely one lesson is that none of us can ever really judge another. I heard of a very holy man who would often say: "Put a cloak over the faults of others. Others may have to put a circus tent over your failings."

More importantly, though, is that the trial and death of Jesus stand at the heart of

the Easter mystery. The sacrificial lamb must die. The innocent one dies so that we, the guilty, may live forever.

A man that many regard as a mystic once said: "To see with the eyes of God is to see the perfection in the seeming imperfection." How hard is that? Innocent people are sometimes convicted. I recall a tombstone I saw out West, which read: "HANGED BY MISTAKE." How is that perfect? There are personal disasters and disasters of various kinds all around the world. How is that perfect?

Despite our best efforts, we realize the human mind can't figure some things out. But Jesus was able to go beyond the human mind. He was able to be in touch with his own divinity. He was one with God. He didn't have the approval of those outside himself because he was conscious of the God within his human body.

Can we not all arrive at some similar conclusion? Life will break all of our hearts at some point. But there is another force within us. What Christ was by nature we are by adoption: "The Father and I will come and make our home in you." Jesus told us. "It is no longer that I live, but Christ who lives in me," St. Paul told us.

Our human egos see the ending of our physical life as the end of life. True, the ego does die. But who we are does not die. At our core, we are spirit. We truly cannot die.

I often say in counseling: "The mind is not our friend." The mind conjures up all kinds of fears, worries and anxieties. When we can say with Christ: "Into your hands I commend my spirit," then we truly understand. Yes, we will grieve, but not despair. Yes, we work for justice and mercy, but always aware of a "higher power" working through us. We question, but we find answers at a deeper level.

In our mind's eye, the trial and death of Jesus was the wrong ending. But from God's point of view, we can see the "perfection" in the seeming imperfection. Death died on the cross that day, not life. The innocent one saved the guilty. We strive to have fair trials. We know we have a fair God. Or, as someone said: "Don't be afraid to trust an uncertain future to a certain God."