

[Readings: Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22; Philippians 2:6-11; Matt 26:14-27:66]

Things aren't always what they seem. We are told to go by "First Impressions" but first impressions of people usually fail when we get to know the other person more deeply. It's easy to see how our First Reading from Isaiah is seen as prophetic: surely we see in the so-called "Suffering Servant" a prediction of what will happen with the arrival of Jesus Christ centuries later.

Things aren't what they seem. You have life all figured out. You are reasonably happy, and all is going relatively well. Then the trauma happens. The disease. The car accident. The violent crime. The bad news. And then it's like taking a cannonball to the stomach. That's how St. Paul expresses the "emptying out" of Jesus when He lowers Himself to become one of us, and when he is raised up on the cross of Calvary. Like a cannonball in the gut.

Things aren't what they seem. Every year I see you come up for the adoration of the cross on Good Friday and every year I weep with you and for you. Because some of you have chosen to share the burden of your crosses with me. And I take that weight and place it at the foot of Calvary with my own crosses. And they are changed. Those crosses are redeemed in ways to redeem the suffering in our lives.

What is the biggest cross in your life right now? What is the greatest suffering you are enduring? I ask YOU to fill in the blank. Then I ask you to make that cross redemptive. How do you do that? You say, "Lord Jesus, crucified, I offer this cross, its suffering and its pain, to Your cross. I fill up what is lacking in Your sufferings by making MY sufferings a part of it." To put it more simply, say, "Lord, my cross is Your cross and Yours is mine, for the salvation of the world."

Then that cross will not be what it seems. It will be the means through which you and I will be saved. Because we have invited the Lord Jesus Christ to share that cross with us. Because in offering it up with the Holy Cross of Jesus Christ, we make that cross have meaning. Because you know that the story of the Cross does not end with humiliation and failure on a forsaken instrument of death. Because things aren't what seem. They all will change in one week! AMEN!