

One of our Catholic traditions is to pray the Stations of the Cross. The stations are a common Lenten devotion. Being a private devotion there is no set way to pray the stations and so there are plethora of books and meditations out there on the Stations of the Cross. And many of them will reflect on the different characters whom we meet along the way. How are we like Pilate who washes his hands of Jesus, like Peter who denies him? How are we like Simon who helps? How are we like the women who cry for him? How are we like Veronica who wipes the face of Jesus? From today's reading of the Passion from Mark's Gospel, how are we like the woman who bathes his feet, or the young man who flees without his clothes? And they are all very good questions and are helpful meditations as we head into Holy Week.

But as I was praying over the Passion Narrative for this Palm Sunday I think the question that Mark is leading us to is who is Jesus? One of the distinct themes of the Gospel of Mark is the cluelessness of the disciples. They are not the brightest bunch; they don't understand Jesus, they don't get what he is saying. They can't figure him out. Generally in the Gospel of Mark, only the evil spirits and the demons recognize Jesus as the Son of God. They are the only ones who see Jesus for who he really is.

And so one of the key lines of today's Passion reading comes when someone does really get it. At the moment of Jesus' death when the Roman Centurion, having witnessed the manner in which Jesus died on the cross declares, "Truly this man was God's Son." (repeat) At the moment of his death Jesus is truly seen as the Son of God and it is a foreigner, someone outside of the covenant who sees it; he gets it. The Gospel also tells us that at the moment the veil of the temple was torn in two. The Holy of Holies, the spot where God's presence dwelled, where only the High Priest entered and but once a year is now opened up. Access to God has been opened up for all but it is through Jesus Christ crucified that this door is opened.

Really Mark is challenging us today. In your search for God, the veil, the barrier has been torn away by Jesus' death on the cross. You will recognize the face of God in the one who has been crucified.

Do we understand? Do we see? Are we like the Roman centurion and actually get it?