

The cross of Jesus Christ and our part in it

Luke 22:63-23:2, 13-49

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Maadi (Egypt) - 12 May 2009

Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and **the people**, and said to them: "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. [...] Therefore, I will punish him and then release him." [...] With one voice they cried out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" [...] Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" (Luke 23:13-14, 16, 18, 20-21)

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." (Luke 23:35)

When all **the people** who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. (Luke 23:48)

When reading the story of this final day in the life of Jesus Christ, it is amazing to see how many people were involved in the process, in one way or another. One specific group were 'the people'. (Greek: laos)

It seems that all that happened on Good Friday was being watch in minute detail by 'the people'.

First, the people shouted for the crucifixion of Christ. They played an active role in getting him crucified.

During the process, they became quieter, and we then see them as spectators; they 'stood watching'. The Greek word for watching is related to our word *theorizing*, and it is tempting to think that they stood there, gazing at the spectacle, wondering what to make of it all. They 'theorized' about it.

And a bit later, we see 'the people' again, now beating their breasts.

They had initially gathered for just witnessing the sight. The Greek word for 'sight' is *theoria*, which also means 'spectacle'.

They had come for the show, but while watching, they began to realize that the drama they were watching, had impact on their own life; they began to mourn and beat their breasts.

They changed from spectators into participants, when they began to realize that they were involved in what was happening. They had shouted for his crucifixion, so they were responsible.

In Church, each year we commemorate the event with a spectacle on Good Friday. In fact, we do this each week when we celebrate Holy Communion. That is a sight that forces us to change from spectators into participants.

People without faith who watch the scene, in Church, in passion plays, in movies, or written in the Gospel records, become participants: They are moved, touched, angry, they are not interested, or they may scoff, just as the audience at the time of Jesus responded in many different ways.

But faith makes us one with 'the people', who were responsible for the death of Christ, and who realized that they were part of the spectacle, not as outsiders, but as insiders.

So we are part of that crowd of people beating their breast. *The Christ, the King of the Universe, the Son of the Creator is killed, and I participated. I wanted his crucifixion. I needed his crucifixion.*

With the people on Good Friday long ago, we beat our breasts; we are responsible for the cosmic spectacle, as He was crucified *for our sins*.

He was despised and rejected by men
a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering
Like one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he took up our infirmities

and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:3-5)

Our sins made a divine plan of restoration needed, and because of love for man and God, the Son of God accepted the consequences. He died for us.

Our faith today transports us to that event, and makes us watch it, and participate in it. We are part of the drama that unfolds; that is why on Good Friday we beat our breasts.

But our faith in Christ makes us also reap the harvest of redemption. The event was gruesome, but He died for us, to restore us to a relationship with God. That is why the event makes us also eternally thankful. This is not just *theory*, this is the *reality* of the cosmic spectacle.