

Dear Brothers and Sisters

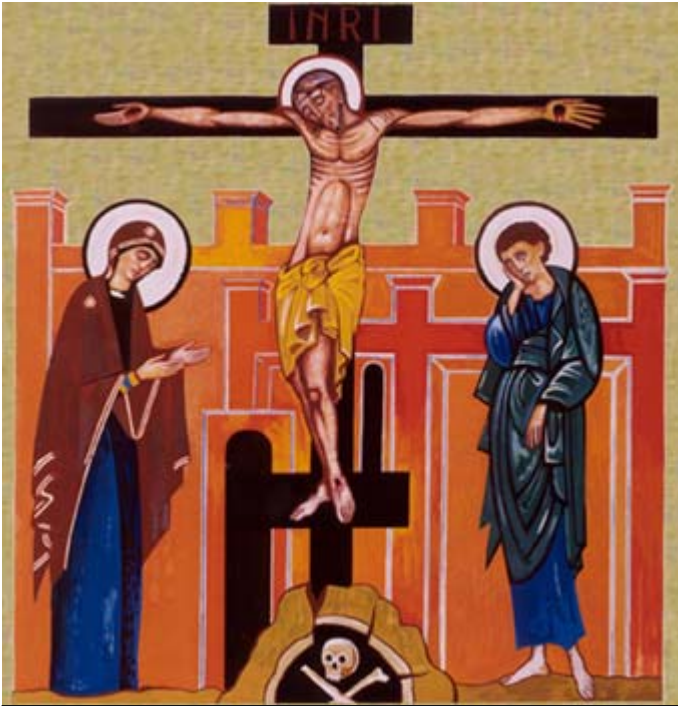


Image: Jesus is the perfect image of God.
Inscription: Jesus was Crucified with the inscription "Jesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum" (INRI), Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews.

"Whose image is this, and whose inscription? Render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God."

Caesar was all-powerful, the Emperor to whom tribute was paid under pain of death. The coin used to pay his tax was called a denarius. It had, as do all coins, an image and an inscription. The image was that of Tiberius Caesar, and the inscription read 'Caesar Augustus Tiberius, son of the Divine Augustus' on one side, and 'Pontifex Max' (meaning supreme bridge builder, or absolute authority).

Jesus, on the Cross, is the real 'Pontifex Max', the bridge between us and God.

Jesus' understanding of Anthropos (man), of God, and of power, is not that of the world. In the world rulers subjugate others, and impose their power. Jesus is the slaughtered lamb; whose power is manifest in weakness. He wins by being defeated. In his crucifixion and death Evil is vanquished.

Love overcomes hatred. Light overcomes darkness. Truth overcomes lies. Life overcomes death.

Each of us bear an image. We were created in the image and likeness of God: 'Let us create man in our own image, in the image of ourselves...God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.' (Genesis 1; 26-27)

God speaks in the plural. Scripture does not say 'Let me create man in my image' but 'Let us create man in our image.' God is a community of persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is not alone, distant. He is communion. We were created in this image of communion. We are called to be in communion, with God and with one another.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said that real communion, real community, can only begin to exist when false concepts of community are broken down. What makes communion is not the fact that we think alike, or come from the same place, or are the same age, or support the same sports team, or come from the same background and up-bringing. Communion does not depend on similarity of interests, or intellectual capacity (or lack thereof); it does not depend on the color of one's skin, it is not conditioned by similarity of personalities or characters, it is not confined by orthodox or liberal, or rich or poor, or political affiliation.

The opposite of community is loneliness. The antithesis of communion is to be alone, or at best to seek the company of others who are like-minded.

The image in which we were created is that of communion. Everything in our life which impedes our communion with others defaces the image of God in us.

But no matter what the obstacle to communion may be – differences of opinion, or race, color, belief, or affiliation – no matter what the barriers may be, they can be overcome in Jesus Christ our Lord. 'Father, may they be one, as you and I are one' Jesus says in the Gospel of John.

This is the image in which God created us. The real tragedy of humanity is that this image may not be rendered to God.

The great Good News is that the image of God, often times distorted in us, has been restored for us in Jesus Christ. Look at him, he is, - as the Ode to Solomon says - your mirror. Behold the image to which God calls each of us.

Fr. Sean