

Good Friday 2017  
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**“Security personnel bag a cross as evidence.”**

**That, God help us, was the caption under a picture on the CNN website earlier this week.**

**It wasn't one of those typical feature stories they do to mark religious holidays, but a hard news story about the bombing of the Coptic churches in Egypt on Palm Sunday.**

**Amid all the pictures of rubble in a place that should be reserved for comfort and peace, amid the pictures of anguished people learning the fate of their loved ones, even amid the pictures of injured and lifeless bodies being carried out, the image engraved most deeply upon my mind is the one with the caption:**

**“Security personnel bag a cross as evidence.”**

**It was a palm cross.**

**Being of the Coptic tradition, it was more elaborate than the palm crosses we do here, but easily recognizable just the same – with one terrible difference: it was stained with blood on most every side.**

**Just like the cross of Jesus we venerate tonight.**

**As Episcopalians, we don't much talk about the blood of Jesus, do we?**

**We like our crosses polished brass or sterling, or, for this one night perhaps, simple wood. Tidy. Easy to adore. And who can blame us?**

**But let us admit – on this of all nights – that the original cross, the true cross of Jesus, was surely stained with blood and worse.**

**Let us acknowledge – on this of all nights –  
that Jesus died a terrible death  
for the innocent and the perpetrators,  
and all those in between.**

**Jesus, a refugee as a child,  
a member of a persecuted religious minority  
in an oppressive, occupied state his whole life,  
died as he lived:  
fearlessly,  
siding with the powerless and vulnerable,  
challenging the powerful who thought  
they were invincible;  
and loving them all beyond measure.**

**His life – and his death – are evidence of this.**

**Here, this night, in the shadow of Jesus' cross,  
I wonder:  
where is the evidence of the cross in our lives?**

**Where is the evidence that we proclaim Christ crucified?  
When we walk out that door,  
when we're back at work next week,  
or at a gathering this weekend,  
will it have made a difference  
that we were here tonight before the cross of Jesus?  
Will anyone be able to see evidence of it in us?**

**Where is the evidence in our lives  
that we stand with the outcast, the oppressed?  
Where is the evidence that we see the humanity  
even in those who wish us harm?**

**As we look upon the cross of Jesus,  
evidence of his love for the whole world,  
let us ask ourselves:  
where is the evidence of ours?**

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