

At the Foot of the Cross

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I want to begin by locating the concern addressed in this talk within my own Christian life. It will also give me a chance to lay out for you what I mean but the cross of Jesus and by standing, or taking our stance, at the foot of that cross.

Many years ago, too many actually, when I was a college student, I attended mass on an Easter Sunday. Of course, I did, although I wasn't what you might call a believer at the time. No matter. The priest presiding, during his homily, used an expression that struck, saying that Jesus was the only person "who came to earth to die." My reaction was instantaneous. "That's absurd. It's unreal. Such a Jesus no longer exists in the real world. He's a concept in Christian theologizing."

This incident at mass got me thinking, and I ended up articulating for myself what I called my big problem with Christianity. The religion was built on an act of theologizing about the cross that created an almost total forgetfulness of the real world significance and meaning of the cross of Jesus.

First, there's the historical, concrete, real world fact—Jesus was executed by crucifixion. He didn't just die, as if he fell off his horse or stepped on a venomous snake or died of cholera in bed surrounded by his loved ones and friends. It isn't the *fact* that he died that's significant. It's *how* he died. He was executed by crucifixion. That's what's significant. That's the cross of Jesus of Nazareth. As Richard Horsley, a noted biblical scholar and historian, describes in his book *Jesus and Empire*:

*There is no way we can understand such practices as crucifixion....other than as purposeful attempts to terrorize subjected peoples....The Romans deliberately used crucifixion as an excruciatingly painful form of execution by torture (basically suffocation), to be used primarily on upstart slaves and rebellious provincials....Many of the victims were never buried but simply left on the crosses as carrion for wild beasts and birds of prey. As with other forms of terrorism, crucifixions were displayed in prominent places for their "demonstration effect" on the rest of the population....Richard Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, "1. Roman Imperialism"*

And Jesus was precisely killed or executed by crucifixion. If we are to believe, therefore, that it is by such a cross that we are saved, this then must mean—if we are to keep ourselves grounded in the real world and not drift off

into some theological abstraction—that it is by his execution that we are saved. And this is the fact that seemed to me to have been glossed over and forgotten by the church as a Christian theology of salvation from personal sin pretty nearly supplanted it—the fact of Jesus’ having been execution—with the abstract, metaphysical concept of the death of a god-man, of Jesus dying in place of his having been killed, of the mere biological fact of the mortality of Jesus, instead of his having been forced into submission to those who had the power and authority to kill, to have him executed.

It wasn’t that Jesus came to earth to die. He came, like everybody else, to live. But the manner in which he lived, and that *for* which he lived, and how he chose to act for the sake of a certain way of living—indeed, the eschatological overthrow of the present world for a new world under the Reign of God—how all this led to his being arrested, tried, and executed by crucifixion—a method of execution implemented by the Romans and having a very clear and pointed meaning to it, a exercise of state terrorism. Crucifixion said to a subject people, “Be careful, don’t step out of line, or this could be you.”

And so what does it mean to say not that Jesus died for us, but that he underwent crucifixion for us, that his life’s project was vetoed by Roman imperial power, that Jesus, leader of a movement, was made an example of by being made a victim of state terrorism? Again, quoting Richard Horsley:

That Jesus was crucified by the Roman governor stands as a vivid symbol of his historical relationship with the Roman imperial order. From the Romans’ point of view, they had decisively humiliated and terrorized his followers and other Galileans and Judeans with this painful and shameful....execution of a brazen rebel. From his followers’ point of view, his mode of execution symbolized his program of opposition to the imperial order....Richard Horsley, Jesus and Empire, “Epilogue”

This is the question I started to ask myself as a young man, the question I’ve continued to ask myself ever since. It is the foundation of both my Christian and Carmelite vocation.

But I must say that through all the years I still don’t know theologically what exactly it means to profess that Jesus was executed for our sake and for our salvation, that for us and our salvation he was crucified under Pontus Pilate. The statement is in the creed, reading like a simple historical fact, just like the statement “born of the Virgin Mary.” But if you look around through the long and somewhat wearisome history of theological reflection on the crucifixion of Jesus under Pontus Pilate, you don’t find that much along specifically this line of inquiry. And even less in the areas of Christian devotional life and spirituality. St. John of the Cross, for example, certainly talks a lot about the cross, but more

as a metaphor and prototype for ascetic self-denial and personal spiritual purification. For example, from *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza 2, n.30:

If you knew how necessary for this high state is suffering, and how profitable suffering and mortification are for attaining to these great blessings, you would never seek for comfort anywhere, but you would rather take up the cross with the vinegar and the gall....St. John of the Cross, The Living Flame of Love, II, n.30

From my perspective John's experience in his prison cell in Toledo was more nearly a moment of his standing at the foot of the cross than any ascetic practices he might have imposed on himself or any ruggedness of lifestyle he was capable of in his Carmelite vocation. Theresa Benedicta of the Cross, Edith Stein, writes of John's time of imprisonment in Toledo, writing in her *Science of the Cross*, "5. The Message of the Cross":

To be helplessly delivered to the malice of bitter enemies, tormented in body and soul, cut off from all human consolation and also from the strengthening sources of ecclesial-sacramental life — can there be a harder school of the cross?...This is the great experience of the cross that took place in Toledo: extreme abandonment, and precisely in this abandonment, union with the Crucified....St. Theresa Benedicta of the Cross, The Science of the Cross, "5. The Message of the Cross"

These are profound words about a profound experience, an experience of passivity, of victimization, of oppression, subjugation, humiliation, isolation, mind games, deception — all in all of a kind of terrorism, an official terrorism, exercised by the powers and authorities of the Carmelite Order — an experience that comes about as close to crucifixion as one can get short of actual execution. I just wish John had taken this experience and, as discretely as he thought appropriate, used it more explicitly as a basis for reflection on the meaning of the cross, and what it means to take up one's cross and live it out beyond the personal, private, and spiritually purgative and transformative experience of union with the crucified, in the words of Edith Stein.

John does write about the interior experience of the Dark Night of Spirit in this vein, for example, in *The Dark Night of the Soul*, chapter 6, n.2:

When this purgative contemplation is most severe, the soul feels very keenly the shadow of death and the lamentations of death and the pains of hell, which consist in its feeling itself to be without God, and chastised and cast out, and unworthy of Him; and it feels that God is angry with it....St. John of the Cross, The Dark Night of the Soul, VI, N.2

The Night of Spirit is a profound and indeed transformative experience, and I don't mean to minimize it. But it is not uniquely Christian and has little to do with the historical event of Jesus' public execution, except as this method of execution, namely, crucifixion, is abstracted from its historical setting and used as a template for a kind of spiritual anguish and abandonment.

What is missing, it seems to me, is the presence of the Powers—the power to kill, to crush, to blot out, vested in an institution or jurisdiction, a societal arrangement of forces or order of control, enforcement, and policing. After all, it's the power to reject utterly and decisively, to reduce to nothing, that really matters here. Quoting from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, from his book on discipleship:

*But Jesus is the Christ who was rejected in his suffering. Rejection removed all dignity and honor from his suffering. It had to be dishonorable suffering. Suffering and rejection express in summary form the cross of Jesus. Death on the cross means to suffer and die as one rejected and cast out....*Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, "Four: Discipleship and the Cross"

These are not interior forces, nor a spiritual death one undergoes in one's soul, but a confrontation with absolute power. John of the Cross experienced it during the time of his imprisonment in Toledo. And he chose to write poetry—which is something that takes place in the public realm, in relation to sympathetic, understanding readers. John, in other words, chose to create a counter-narrative and subversive meaning to that being imposed on him by the official powers of the Order.

Indeed, poetry—if it is more than mere versification and poetic window-dressing—always has about it an element of the subversive. And the fact that John emerged from his imprisonment in Toledo a true poet says a lot about how he managed to survive this effort to crush him and the Reform for which he was a spiritual leader—to not merely survive, that is, but to survive with integrity, a show of moral courage, and a purity of intention. St Theresa Benedicta, again in her *Science of the Cross*, says of John's birth as a poet—and, more importantly, as a poet capable of writing as he did, with relative simplicity, mystic clarity, and expressive force:

*[John's poetry as a whole now shows us that] his soul has attained to complete detachment from self, to simplicity, and [that], in union with God....a spirit of highest power and vitality has given itself into captivity, a heart full of passionate fire has come to rest in radical renunciation....*St. Theresa Benedicta of the Cross, *The Science of the Cross*, 23. Spiritual Renunciation

By the way, something similar can be said of the use of certain passages from the *Psalms*, either as recited by Jesus himself or as alluded to or implied or directly quoted by the evangelist throughout the gospel passion narratives, which they supply with a counter-narrative. And then there are the various episodes of the passion narrative—like the darkness at noon or the profession by the centurion, “Truly this man was the Son of God.” They tell a counter-narrative to that imposed by the execution itself. And among the events of this counter-narrative are Jesus’ words from the cross addressed to his mother and to the disciple whom he loved in the Fourth Gospel. But more on that later

I want to turn now to the question I raised as the controlling question of this talk: What does it mean to profess that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate for our sake and the sake of our salvation? I don’t think that reflecting in an abstract way, following some kind of conceptual, theological line of reasoning, will get us anywhere. That’s why I’ve chosen to put the question in this form: What does it mean to stand at the foot of the cross? What does it mean to live out our allegiance to Jesus standing at the foot of the cross?

As a place to begin, let me ask: Who did, as a matter of fact, stand at the foot of the cross—or, if not exactly at its foot, which was historically improbable, then near enough to the cross to serve as public witnesses, as keeping public vigil, and thereby publicly associating themselves with the one there being executed? In other words, the spiritual meaning of the fact that Jesus was executed under Pontius Pilate is best found in those who stood near his execution, mourned over it, shared in its affront, its victimization, its manifestation of who actually rules in the world by possessing the last, definitive say over everything? In other words, whose kingdom is come, whose will gets done, at least on earth, if not exactly in heaven?

Well, for one we can say that it wasn’t the apostles, the members of the Twelve, the apostolic witness—the important people, the men, the ones whose official, authoritative, masculine witness the church would look to as its founding witness. But, as a matter of fact, when it comes to the cross of Jesus, the apostolic witness is nowhere to be found. As Mark Gruber puts it in his book *The Darkest Icon*:

[The] centrality [of the presence of women witnesses] in the essential moment of the [cross] reveals a scandal in the male apostolic band. These brave and caring women are an indictment of the apostles’ cowardice.... Since masculine authority, especially in an honor/shame culture, is bound to the virtue of courage, their cowardice exposed is especially indicting! The holy women are.... painful witnesses of the scandal of the Cross and the grief

*of the tomb....*Mark Gruber, *The Darkest Icon*, “18. The Hour of the Mother’s Homecoming”

Yes, that says it. Those who embody the scandal of the cross, and thus embody its meaning for our salvation in allegiance to Jesus, are the women. The Gospel of Mark cites three by name: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome. Then adds: “There were also many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.” You get the sense of, while not sizable, at least significant band of women.

Mark mentions as well that the women were “looking on from a distance.” Of course, that was undoubtedly the best they could do, to stand at a distance. Although it’s not absolutely certain, it’s highly likely that no one was allowed to get close—no one who might give any comfort, that is, only the accusers and abusers, the higher ranking Jerusalem officials, the chief priests and members of the scribal class, who were allowed to draw near to level insults and scorn at Jesus. That would have been in keeping with the whole meaning and purpose of crucifixion. It was a way of utterly shaming the crucified, of insulting him unto death and beyond, so to speak, of cursing him. The chief priests and scribes would only have been assisting Pontius Pilate and the soldiers in this task.

So, at a distance stood a band of women, including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome, keeping vigil, absorbed into the horror, the loss, the grief, the hopelessness, the tragedy, the shock and brokenness, the broken-down-ness, of what was happening to their Master and Teacher and Spiritual Leader, and to the life-giving, redeeming movement he’d inaugurated and of which they were participants.

As for the other Gospels, Matthew follows Mark, but omits Salome and cites “the mother of the sons of Zebedee” in her place. Luke, interestingly, gives no names, but instead refers to “all [Jesus’] acquaintances [who] stood at a distance, including the women who had followed him from Galilee.” The expression “acquaintances” is clearly, and probably intentionally, ambiguous. I mean, acquaintances could include the Twelve, for that matter. But Luke’s Gospel is protecting the male apostolic witness for the evangelist’s own apologetic purposes. His passion narrative portrays the execution of Jesus as though it were some kind of big mistake, a miscarriage of justice, a kind of blind “they know not what they do,” as if everyone were just blindly going through the motions. But Pontius Pilate and the Sanhedrin knew exactly what they were doing. Otherwise, the cross would have the significance of Jesus, say, getting hit and killed by a drunk driver, tragic but ultimately meaningless.

At this point let me offer three quotes from the theologian Walter Wink, from his book *Jesus and Non-Violence*. They will suggest three aspects or

ingredients of a spirituality of the cross, of a saving way of life in the Spirit lived at the foot of the cross and, like the faithful, courageous women, giving witness to the truth of the cross, its counter-narrative, so to speak.

First, Walter Wink writes: *The cross was not just Jesus' identification with the victims of oppression; it was also his way of dealing with these evils. It was not because he was a failed insurrectionist that Jesus died as he did, but because he preferred to suffer injustice and violence rather than be their cause....*Walter Wink, *Jesus and Non-violence: A Third Way*, "6. The Way of the Cross"

Second, he says: *The cross means....that I am free to act faithfully without undue regard for the outcome....I cannot really be open to the call of God in a situation of oppression if the one thing I have excluded as an option is my own suffering and death....*Walter Wink, *Jesus and Non-violence: A Third Way*, "6. The Way of the Cross"

And, third, these words: *The cross also means not necessarily winning. The Principalities and Powers are so colossal, entrenched, and determined that the odds for their overthrow or repentance are minuscule, whatever means we use. It is precisely because the outcome is in question, however, that we need to choose a way of living that already is a living of the outcome we desire. The Reign of God is already in the process of arriving when we choose means consistent with its arrival....*Walter Wink, *Jesus and Non-violence: A Third Way*, "6. The Way of the Cross"

Let me convert these three statements by Walter Wink into three principles for living alongside the women as witnesses of and to the cross of Jesus.

(1) It matters greatly how we choose to deal with evil, to live and die in response to it. This is true on a personal level, of course, but also on an institutional level, in the parish, the larger church, the workplace. It is true on a societal level, insofar as we have any effect, however small, on the evils and injustices of our society. And there's the national level which, in a supposed democracy, we should have some say in, but which often, unless we're particularly wealthy, we do not.

As with Jesus, the question of success or failure doesn't lie in our own hands. And strictly pragmatic calculations shouldn't be a decisive concern, nor a guarantee of success part of the bargain or contract that determines our commitment. Probably the best way to assess where we stand in this regard is to

assess our commitment to suffer injustice and violence, if need be, rather than in any way or to any degree be their cause in others.

(2) This statement repeats and reinforces the above. I am to be “free to act faithfully without undue regard for the outcome.” I am to be open to the call of God—his peace and work of reconciliation, his gift of communion and surpassing joy—by never excluding as an option, or a possibility, my own suffering and even death.

The women looking on at a distance embody this principle perfectly. They did what they could do, stepping forth from the personal and domestic spheres where women belonged into the public, masculine world, putting themselves potentially in harm’s way, or at the very least subjecting themselves to scorn, ridicule, and the loss of religious and societal blessing, respect, and favor, all the while knowing that they couldn’t alter the outcome one iota, yet being faithful and steadfast nonetheless.

(3) “The Cross also means not necessarily winning.” To win an argument so as to be right even if we may be wrong. To win a power struggle so as to be in control or come out on top or be more important than others. To win by being white not black, by speaking English not Spanish, by being Catholic not Protestant, let alone Muslim or non-religious, and so to end up being categorically favored by God. To win a tribal or internecine dispute so as to be in the privileged group—rich not poor, powerful not powerless, a New Yorker not an Arkansan, a Republican not a Democrat, an insider not an outsider, one of the We not the Them.

“It is precisely because the outcome is in question that we need to choose a way of living that already is a living of the outcome we desire.” Religious life strives to live *for* the Reign of God by striving to live *in* the Reign of God, failing more often than not. Lay people need to take the lead here, freeing this project from the privileged and functionary character of the clerical state, and seek ways of life in the world, but not *of* it, where the community, not just the individual, is shaped and structured by the Spirit. Of course, we all need to be persons of contemplative prayer, transformed by the grace of this peaceful, silent, listening, and surrendering experience of the divine presence in prayer. Then we can better serve as agents of the Reign of God wherever we are, whatever we do.

You may have noticed that I’ve so far failed to mention the Fourth Gospel—the Gospel containing the episode where, with Mary his mother and an unnamed disciple whom he loved standing at the foot of the cross, Jesus from the cross bequeaths the disciple to his mother as his son, and his mother to the

disciple as his mother. It's an important moment in its own right — especially because the evangelist has Jesus proclaim immediately afterwards “It is finished” — but also particularly important for us Carmelites, who hear it proclaimed from the pulpit year after year on the Solemnity of Mary, mother of Jesus and Virgin of Mt. Carmel.

It's a difficult passage with a multitude of interpretations. Some seek its meaning and significance within the context of the Fourth Gospel itself, others look to extraneous concerns, like Mariology and Marian devotion, for example. Let me take a paragraph or so to sum up how I read the passage. Then I'll turn to its bearing on the question I've raised here, living at the foot of the cross as integral to the spirituality of Carmel.

The Fourth Gospel lists four female witnesses standing near the cross — the mother of Jesus, unnamed; Mary Magdalene, named last, and whom all four Gospels mention, the tradition clearly remembering her in such a role; an unnamed woman, the sister of Jesus' mother; and Mary of Clopas, an expression which probably means the wife of Clopas. These four women are mentioned almost certainly because the evangelist has them in his source for the passion narrative, although the evangelist does rearrange it so that they're standing near the cross, rather than at a distance. That way Jesus' words from the cross can be clearly heard. It is possible that the presence of Jesus' mother near the cross, mentioned nowhere else, was an invention of the evangelist, again for the sake of what will follow. But the symmetry of the list — the two named Marys, of Clopas and of Magdalene, together with two unnamed, yet related women, Jesus's mother and his mother's sister — is just too perfect. It probably comes from the evangelist's source material.

The presence of a male disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, is surely an invention of the evangelist. There is no reason to identify him with the evangelist himself, let alone with John, son of Zebedee, brother of James and one of the Twelve. In fact, scholars argue over whether to think of this disciple as a real, historical person or a purely symbolic creation of the evangelist, a way of injecting the community of faith into the passion narrative at three key places — the Last Supper, the cross, and the empty tomb. Either way, the disciple is used here as a symbolic figure in the brief pronouncement of Jesus to follow, as is his mother as well. I take the narrative, outside of the mere mention of the four women — undoubtedly to be paired with the four soldiers mentioned just prior — as wholly an invention of the evangelist.

In this way the story can better speak to the question at hand — what happens at the foot of the cross for those who are there so as to be part of it? — rather than thinking of it as an historical event which may or may not concern us.

Simply put, Jesus and, at the foot of the cross, his faithful witnesses, those who were willing to associate themselves with him and with his rejection by the Powers, in utter failure, unto the very end—these Powers had their way with all of them, with Jesus, of course, but also with those who gave witness before the Powers to the Reign of God by submitting themselves to this gristly self-demonstration of those same Powers as they slowly killed Jesus. There, at the foot of the cross, in the moment of utter fruitlessness and defeat, Jesus assured the future of their new communion in the Spirit as a new family born of God.

The scene harkens back to the wedding at Cana. Only now has Jesus' hour come. And his mother's plea, "They have no wine," has been answered. The wine has not run out. In fact, a new wine is now being given in Jesus' words that constitute a formal act of disposing of one's property to the younger generation—women being considered property in a family. To the older generation of expectant, believing, hoping Jews out of which Jesus' mission to the people of God and to the revelation of what real power is, what real life and real divine favor are—all as represented by his mother—are granted a future in those who come after, the younger generation, whether Jewish or Gentile no longer matters. They are now called together as one family in God.

In other words, while this exercise of death—namely, crucifixion—overseen by the Powers as vested in Pontius Pilate and the Sanhedrin, is seeking to destroy and terminate and bring to nought what Jesus lived for, a different sort of exercise flares up—an exercise of the powerlessness of agape love, of loving-kindness and mercy, compassion, forgiveness, peace, non-violence, the equality and mutuality of true friendship, all that constitutes Jesus' vision of the Reign of God—and goes on living in the new wine of the future, the wine of God's covenant faithfulness to his people.

This is the work of Jesus' Hour having come at last to fruition in his death by crucifixion, his martyrdom. It writes a counter-narrative to the story of the crucifixion as the way it is or has to be, to the Reign of the Powers—the reign of winners over losers, the strong over the weak, those who, with their oppressive self-justification, are on top, for so God has ordained it. Thus, they reign over the nobodies, the voiceless, faceless, nameless of history.

Jesus gets executed for his subversive vision and practice in life. But his death is just as subversive since he gives to his beloved disciples "for *our* sake." Out of the ashes, and on the strength of the faithful women's courage, solidarity, and suffering, the church of those who live by the cross to the end is born.

It may have taken a while, but St. Paul was caught up in his own life and person in this truth. He writes of his realization of true power in 2 Corinthians:

But [Christ Jesus] said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me....2 Corinthians 12:9

Such an understanding situates Paul at the foot of the cross if by "power" is meant not divine power overriding human weakness. Rather, it is through such exercises of human weakness as are self-giving, agape love, mercy and compassion, solidarity, forgiveness, a willingness to be debased and to suffer, if need be, and a tireless preaching on behalf of a new style of community wherein we are neither "slave nor free, Jew nor Greek, male nor female" — a radically egalitarian community not based or ordered around such societal, economic, religious, or gender distinctions. It is through such forms of weakness that Christ's power is revealed as dwelling among us.

St. Teresa of Jesus also developed and tried hard to inculcate a similarly radical vision of a way of life in keeping with the Reign of God, a way of living *for* it by living *in* it. It was the foundation of her Reform, along a dedication to the spiritual freedom women could find through the practice of contemplative prayer. Alas, the Order has made water of her wine ever since.

Teresa writes in her *Way of Perfection*:

In this house where are not to be more than thirteen — modeled on Jesus and his little community of the Twelve — all must be friends, all must be loved, all must be held dear, all must be helped....St. Teresa of Jesus, The Way of Perfection, ch.4, n.7

And St. John of the Cross, more than perhaps *writing* about a life at the foot of the cross, actual *lived* there. One experience that followed his imprisonment in Toledo was, once being made *persona non grata*, that he had to go into exile, leaving Castile behind and going to live in Andalusia.

We find in one of his letters, therefore:

Be consoled with the thought that you are not as abandoned and alone as I am down here [in Andalusia.] For after that whale swallowed me up and vomited me out on this alien port, I have never merited to see Mother Teresa of Jesus again or the saints up there in Castile....from a letter to Catalina de Jesús, Discalced Carmelite Nun, dated July 6, 1581

Crucifixion was a form of execution. But being sent into exile is another. In both, the victim is silenced and disposed of and uprooted from, literally, his or her life or, equally literally, vacated from his or her own homeland, unfit to be a

person. John may have escaped his prison cell relatively unharmed. He did not escape this deep rejection and ostracism by the Order.

Also, in the last year of his life John was once again rejected and cast out, this time by his new family, his brothers in the Discalced Carmelite Order. He was denied any office, for one. He was, literally, made useless, pointless, silenced, no more than dead weight to be cast off.

The vastness of the desert [of La Peñuela, north of Baeza, where he sent to get him out of the way] is a great help to the soul and body, although the soul fares very poorly....I am well off without knowing anything, and the life of the desert is admirable.

*This morning we have already returned from gathering our chickpeas, and so the mornings go by. On another day we shall thresh them. It is nice to handle these mute creatures, better than being badly handled by living ones. God grant that I may stay here....*from a letter to Doña Ana del Mercado y Peñalosa in Granada

This time John would die in disgrace. It would never be lifted from him. But he found solidarity nonetheless with chickpeas, mute creatures that they are. How he must have felt to be essentially driven out of the spiritual movement of life in and for the Reign of God which he helped begin and been an inspiration for, and all for nothing more petty grudges and spite and the consolidation of power and control.

Also there's a sense of "we do it because we can" and "what bigger prize is there than John of the Cross" about his treatment in the last year of his life. More than at any other time, it was in his final year that he stood at the foot of the cross, especially since he died experiencing this rejection and shame with no relieve or hope of rehabilitation. There was no resolution to his abandonment and exclusion in sight. Indeed, there was to be no winning for John of the Cross, this side of the grave. And that is the life and death of s witness to Jesus standing at the foot of the cross.