

“Three elements constitute the making of every great message”, writes Blessed Fulton Sheen, “a pulpit, an audience and a truth”, as was the case atop Calvary this day. The pulpit? The Holy Cross. The audience? We know who it was then, and us now. The Truth? Our Blessed Lord Himself.

But He spoke so little on that pulpit; just seven times, about 28 words. Such a short message! Why so few words, in contrast to his life?

He must have intended this to be a mystery, inviting us to delve deeper into its meaning.

On the human level we can understand his death was predictable. History is filled with leaders who challenge others to a moral and ethical way of life. We, as if shrugging our shoulders know he was a good guy with a good message but they killed him anyway, which was predictable given who he threatened.

Or we go a little deeper and understand his death was heroic, because Jesus held his mission more precious than his life; never wavering from the truth despite the consequences, including death. And maybe we become a little queasy as we recall the times we have feared the consequences our own faith, and how often we may waver under the pressures of an unbelieving world.

We can go a little deeper and understand Jesus death as historic, because the story of his life was sealed forever. Here we are 2,000 years later and still talking about it, and maybe even trying to live it ourselves.

We go even deeper and understand Jesus death as sublime, the result when one sacrifices himself so others will live: “I am the one you are looking for...let the others go free”. Besides freeing his disciples that night, who else?

When the final sword pierces our heart as it did Our Blessed Lord’s we will understand Jesus death as what Monsignor Ronald Knox, writing in the 1930’s called a “Pageant of Suffering”. This horrid execution is difficult to absorb, really, especially as we are reminded it was the price he paid for our sins and salvation. *What wondrous love is this oh my soul, what wondrous love is this, that the Lord of bliss would bear the dreadful curse of my soul* as the beautiful hymn goes.

In reality, the Cross stands on a plane higher than our human intellect. There will be always something lacking in our understanding of it because the world had never, nor will ever again witness a love like this. God enters this messed-up world of ours-of sin, sorrow, death and suffering, and takes it all on himself-every bit of it to make us his own again. How humanly incomprehensible, and thus mysterious!

And we should never, ever leave it at that. We must commit ourselves to going ever deeper and deeper into this unfathomable mystery. Not only today and Lent but every day. Because in doing so, Our Lord will reveal to us the true quality of our own faith.

“In the crevices of that bare rock where the Cross was laid” wrote Knox, “is where our faith must take root and grow. In a world where the cause of Christ has enemies so numerous and so powerful; in a world that threatens to abolish the very vocabulary of religion, you and I need faith”.

And we will be given the strength to conquer it all, sin, sorrow, death and suffering because of the Truth that our Master died on a blood-soaked Cross.

Christ told us so little as he died, and he tells us so little now. He doesn't want us to understand. He only wants us to believe.