



*What is the
"matrix of grace"
and where
are we in it?*

Holy Week

**Friday
April 10, 2009**

*The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor
and give you peace.*

Have you ever wondered what the Lord's face looks like? On this Good Friday, as we hear the stories of Christ's crucifixion, we see the face of the Lord in the face of Jesus, shining with sweat, clenched with pain and resolution, effort and grief. This is the face of Jesus praying in the place called Gethsemane on the night of his arrest. This is the face of Jesus, walking alone on his way to the cross.

Early apocryphal writings speak of a woman named Veronica who is among the crowd watching as Jesus is paraded through the streets of Jerusalem. Veronica sees Jesus' face shining with sweat, and when she steps out from the crowd to wipe his face, to offer that simple touch of compassion, she finds God's face shining upon her.

Each of the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke report that as Jesus is crucified and dies, his disciples watch and follow from a distance. We cannot blame the disciples - we too, keep ourselves at a safe distance from suffering, ignoring the cries of creation, continuing on with our lives, business as usual.

On this Good Friday as we gather to bear witness to Christ's hours of suffering, his loneliness and pain, and his death on the cross, perhaps we might seek to become more like Veronica, a woman who dared to come near to one who was suffering, and in doing so, saw the face of God. Perhaps we might dare to bear witness to Christ's passion in the passion of creation, to take up as our own the concerns and needs of all creatures who suffer in our world.

As we dare to bear witness, may we also see the Lord's face shining upon us. We bear witness to suffering, knowing the promise of resurrection, and it is that hope which strengthens us to respond to what our eyes see, with our hearts and hands and our whole lives.