

When we are getting to know someone new—at church or at a social gathering of some kind—we tend to talk about light things and a little bit of basic information about each other. *Meeting someone new usually involves a bit of a dance as you share little things* and then see what comes back to you from the other person. And perhaps you find some things in common and things of interest. We do it all so very intuitively that we hardly think about it. But what we don't usually do when meeting someone new is talk about the really crucial moments of our lives—*the great losses and greatest joys*—that have shaped who we are. Those are saved until much later--if they are ever shared at all. We may, to some extent, guard them, holding them just out of sight.

It is possible to say that the Christian message *reverses* this kind of self-revelation. Compared to the way we tell—or don't so easily tell--our own stories to others, Christianity is really quite *counter-intuitive*.

Even though the stories of *Jesus' cross and resurrection* come at the *end* of the Gospel books, they are commonly now believed to have been the *first* narratives that took shape as early Christians began to find a way to talk about Jesus. Gradually, all the other stories of Jesus were added on to the stories of the cross and resurrection, forming a larger narrative as we now have. And we can also tell from the letters of the apostle Paul that the leading message that he told to friends and strangers was also of *Jesus' cross and resurrection*.

Christianity, from the very beginning, has *led* with the *hardest* stories within its experience—the most vulnerable, the most painful, and the most incomprehensibly wonderful stories about Jesus. This does reverse the usual conventions of self-revelation that we are accustomed to. Holy Week takes us swiftly into deep places, whether we are ready or not. And, probably, we are rarely ever ready for this. We have other things on our minds.

But if we can show up and listen...and let our thoughts about ourselves quiet down for a while...and give our attention today and this week to Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection...then there is the possibility of meeting a God we thought we knew...but really did not...as God's heart is willingly laid bare before us...God's greatest loss and greatest joy...shared with you...the beginning of something new.