

For my money, one of the best plays ever written is William Shakespeare's Macbeth.

It has everything that makes for exciting drama; treachery, jealousy, envy, murder, guilt and a surprise ending.

Of course, by the time Shakespeare wrote this play, these themes were already well entrenched in our world.

If we hear again, today's first reading, we would see that it is a description of the bitter fruits of these attitudes and emotions.

The words of the writer are remarkably similar to the words we could imagine hearing being said between those who plotted the death of Jesus.

Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us; he sets himself against our doings

St. James is more to the point today when he says:

Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice.

Both Wisdom and James describe certain dynamics that can be at work in the human heart.

The first is this: When good people come across someone more virtuous, they are grateful. They see another's goodness and are reminded of what they can become, and it encourages them to pursue excellence.

Jesus puts His arms around a child because of the innocence and virtue that they possess. In doing so, He tells us that we are to welcome the pure and the good, without envy or jealousy.

The second dynamic is this: when wicked people come across someone virtuous, they become bitter, even furious.

Why do you suppose this is?

It is because virtuous persons serve as proof that the wicked **could** be different. The good person takes away their excuses and exposes their mediocrity. They would immediately reject the child.

Christ, who is the perfect example of virtue, understood this.

So, in the middle of all the excitement aroused by His ministry, he stops and predicts that he will be tortured to death at the instigation of the leaders of his own people.

The greatest events in human history are about to unfold . . . through an evil plan.

But Jesus, Who is Wisdom incarnate, had a plan much wiser than the schemes of his opponents.

The Resurrection is a new beginning, but it is also the ultimate surprise ending!

The worldly wisdom of envy is no match for the heavenly wisdom of Love.

And love has the power to make everything work out to the good.

Of course, the Apostles could not understand that.

And Love seized the opportunity to give a lesson in humility and service.

Soon the cross would be His pulpit. The Holy One, who came not to be served, but to serve, would redeem the world.

When we doubt, when we struggle with faith because of evil in the world, when we question a God who occasionally allows the bad stuff to touch our lives, remember the power of love. Remember that when all else fails, in the end, love has already prevailed.

Like the Apostles, we too cannot always see that victory, can we? We sometimes see it later, but our memories don't always kick into the positive when we are in the middle of trials.

And that can be blinding.

From a Catholic view, the tragedy of the Macbeths of the world is not the evil they have done, but that they are blinded, they cannot see past that evil and so they fall into despair. They lose hope.

Christ is different. He predicts the cross and at the same time embraces it.

That is one of the reasons why the crucifix, the cross with the body of Christ is the central **image** of the Catholic faith. As a symbol, it identifies us because we, the mystical body of Christ, identify with it.

It demonstrates how much he loves us. But it also demonstrates that we have nothing to fear ... for if he can bring glory out of the shame of the cross, he can bring glory and good out of anything. Everything has been redeemed!

Look at the crucifix and you know you are loved. Look harder and faith can be stirred in the soul. Keep looking, and you will find that despair need never win, and that hope is ours.