



## ***WE ARE CALLED TO REVEAL WHO JESUS IS!!***

Visitors to Arlington National Cemetery know they have found Section 60 when they spot the fresh flowers, bright-eyed teddy bears, and other touching mementoes among the military gravesites. Section 60, the subject of a TV documentary, is the final resting place for America's war dead from Iraq and Afghanistan. The camera crew spent four months at the cemetery as witnesses to the grieving family members whose losses were softened by the bonds they made with each other. One photographer found himself "dripping tears on his camera lens." A mother explained that talking about her dead son helped to "keep his memory alive." A widow said that she hoped the film would help other bereaved family members "understand that you can make it through this." For their part, the film makers wanted viewers to remember "that there are people crying in Section 60."

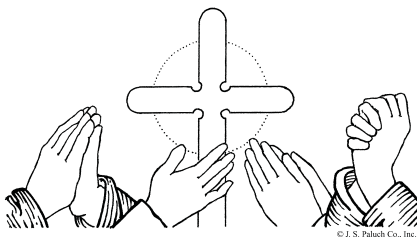
Long before Jesus was nailed to a cross, he knew that a painful death awaited him. His family and friends would mourn him with bitter tears. In order to prepare them for what was to come, Jesus asked them to reflect on who he was and who they, as his followers, would have to be. Today he requires the same of us. He asks: Who do you say that I am? How will others know that you are my disciples?

**We reveal who Jesus is by our willingness to take on whatever cross awaits us.** Among the Twelve, Peter alone identified Jesus as the Messiah of God. However, his use of that exalted title revealed that he expected Jesus to be a victorious military hero like his ancestor King David. To set Peter and the other disciples straight, Jesus prophesied that his rising would be preceded by great suffering, rejection and a cruel death. Those who would bear his name must be willing to let go daily of self-centered concerns, take up the cross of compassionate service to others, and follow wherever he leads. As C.S. Lewis once put it, "We were promised sufferings. They were part of the program. We were even told 'Blessed are they who mourn.'" To expect otherwise is to show that we do not know the Messiah.

**We reveal who Jesus is by our willingness to be one in him.** It was not until after the resurrection that Peter and his companions came to know Jesus as the suffering Messiah who identified with all God's people of every race, nation, class and gender. As Paul taught, "All of you are one in Christ Jesus." Jesus went to his death driven by an immense love for all people. However, he showed particular care for those who were poor, who were sick, or who were relegated to the outskirts of the community. By befriending, standing up for, healing, and sharing meals with these least ones, he left us a lesson on how to be one in him. We show our unity as Christians by going to where people are suffering in mind, body or spirit and caring for them.

**We reveal who Jesus is by mourning our sins and seeking a closer identity with Christ.** Today we hear Zechariah promising the Israelites that God will pour out "a spirit of grace and petition" on them. God will enable them to mourn over the unnamed one "whom they have pierced." They will mourn the national sinfulness that has caused the death of an only son. Expressing our sorrow for harming or failing to help others is the beginning of conversion. Weeping over our words and deeds that have pierced others' hearts is the first step on the path to reconciliation. Out of our mourning comes the joy of being more Christ-like. When Jesus asks us, "Who do you say that I am?" we might respond with one word: love. And what does love look like? As St. Augustine put it, "[Love] has the hands to help...the feet to hasten to the poor and needy...the eyes to see misery...the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of [all]. That is what love looks like."

What a blessing we are to the world when we, as followers of Jesus, reveal to others who he is by our compassionate service to and our unity with all who suffer.



*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.-- Galatians 3:28*