Rev's Reflections

Every Sunday growing up, all through mass I would stare at the crucifix on the front wall of the sanctuary, and stare at poor, frail, broken, skinny Jesus, suffering under his crown of thorns. As a child I found it shocking, despite the icon's familiarity and omnipresence. As a young adult, I found it gratuitous.

Like most UU's, I don't believe in the divinity of Yeshua of Natzeret, known in the west as Jesus of Nazareth. I believe he was a great prophet and rabbi, challenging enough to be a threat to most of the power structures vying for dominance or survival at the time. But he was a man, not God. That's my belief. Yours may be different.

As I have come to understand my own beliefs about what is true and right and good in the world — and how messy it can be to even THINK about such things — I no longer find the image of Jesus suffering on the cross to be so gratuitous. I find it to be an important reminder that suffering exists in the world, and people who challenge the status quo do so at great risk. It's good to remember the suffering of Jesus as reminder of the prophethood of all who risks their own lives in order to speak truth to power. Especially as Christians mourn and pay homage on Good Friday, the day of remembrance of that murder two millennia ago.

This year, as we have done in the last two, we'll be gathering on Good Friday, March 29, at 7:15pm for a non-traditional Tenebrae service. We'll begin in the light of day with 13 candles lit. In Unitarian Universalist fashion, we'll share stories of the crucifixion alternated with stories of modern-day oppression and suffering, extinguishing a candle after each reading. We'll end in the dark, and leave in silence.

If you haven't come to the service before, I'd like to invite you to give it a try. The minimalism and bleakness of the ritual, and the reflection that comes afterward, help to contextualize and give more joy to the celebrations of Easter and of springtime. Regardless of what you believe about the divinity of the man called the Christ.

In Peace,
Rev Denis