

*On the mind of the Rev. J. Gregory Morgan...*

### ST. PAUL'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

(from Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan, The First Paul: Reclaiming the Radical Visionary behind the Church's Conservative Icon, Harper One, NY, 2009)

“The cross gave meaning to Easter just as Easter gave meaning to the cross. Neither would have the meaning it does without the other. Together, they were revelation. Indeed, the plural, ‘revelations,’ is more appropriate, for they revealed more than one thing...In Christian theology, the ‘doctrine of the atonement’ concerns the meanings of Jesus’s death. For many Christians today, atonement has come to be identified with a particular understanding, namely, *substitutionary atonement*. When people ask us what we think about atonement, this is almost always what they are asking about.

But atonement has a much broader theological meaning. It needs to be reclaimed if we are to understand the atoning significance Paul saw in the cross. Like many other common Christian words, it needs to be redeemed. Atonement refers to *a means of reconciliation*. It presupposes a situation of separation or estrangement. How is the estrangement overcome? How does reconciliation occur? This is what atonement is about.

An old wordplay catches this broader meaning: atonement is about ‘*at-one-ment*.’ How does at-one-ment with God occur? What role does the cross play in this? How does his death bring about at-one-ment? For Paul, the answer to this question is plural, not singular. A scholar recently wrote that Paul had dozens of ways of speaking about the atoning significance of the cross. That may be hyperbole, but not by much. We group Paul’s understandings into three categories: the cross reveals the character of empire (Rome), the path of personal transformation, and the character of God.”...Jesus was an anti-imperial figure and Paul’s gospel was an anti-imperial gospel. The empire killed Jesus. The cross was the imperial ‘no’ to Jesus. But God raised him. The resurrection was God’s ‘yes’ to Jesus. God’s vindication of Jesus --- and thus also God’s ‘no’ to the powers that killed him...This is the primary meaning of Paul’s emphatic use of ‘Christ crucified’ in its context in I Corinthians. In the brilliant, dense, and illuminating overture to the letter (1:17-2:16), Paul contrasts the ‘wisdom of God’ and the ‘wisdom of the world.’...For Paul, Christ crucified and risen revealed the way to a new life ‘in Christ.’...it involves an internal death and resurrection, dying to an old identity and way of life and rising into a new identity and way of life...Paul often speaks of Jesus dying ‘for others’ and as a ‘sacrifice.’...this understanding of ‘Christ crucified’ sees it as a revelation of the depth of God’s love and Christ’s love for us, a conviction that he shared with early Christianity generally. Jesus reveals what God is like... as the decisive revelation of God, Jesus reveals what has often been called the ‘nature’ and ‘will’ of God...What is God like? And what is God’s passion? What is God passionate about? Paul’s answer is that the death of Jesus --- Christ crucified --- reveals God’s character as love and God’s passion as the world...” (pp. 130-131)

---

### TODAY AFTER CHURCH

**12:30 to 2:00 p.m.** All young adults in their 20s and 30s are invited to lunch in the Parish Dining Room. This time will include games and thoughtful conversation on faith led by Seminarian Romy John Abraham.

### BIBLE STUDY RETURNS

**Sunday, April 19, 10:00 to 10:40 a.m.** Join Fr. Greg for the second in a three-part series on “The Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus.” We will read and discuss the major passages describing these events as we re-discover them through the pages of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Bibles will be provided.

### SANDWICH SUNDAY

**Sunday, April 19, 12:30 to 1:15 p.m.** Come to the Parish House Dining Room to help make sandwiches for delivery to a nearby homeless drop-in center.

## HYMN SING POTLUCK

**Thursday, April 23, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.** We warmly invite you to the Assembly Hall for *A Celebration of Hymns and Faith* led by Seminarian Romy John Abraham. Romy trained in voice at Trinity College of Music, London, and has served as pianist, organist, singer, and choir conductor in Episcopal churches in Albany and Long Island. He currently directs Euphony Chorus, a voluntary choir in the New York region.

This evening will center on the beauty and power of sacred music, bringing us together in worship, song, and shared spiritual experience. We will be using 1982 Hymnal and taking requests, so come ready to sing your favorite hymns.

It's a potluck! You are welcome to bring a dessert or other refreshment to share. Coffee and tea will be provided.

### SPRING STEWARDSHIP – GIVING FOR GOD’S HOLY PURPOSES

Quarterly statements of giving were mailed out last week. Thanks to everyone who has supported Incarnation with your financial gifts this year. Donations like yours allow us to continue serving this congregation and our community by offering worship services, discipleship opportunities, and mission work. We could not do it without you!

To date, **56** households have pledged to give a total of **\$239,272** in 2026. We invite you to join them and help us reach our goal of \$275,000. Fill out a Commitment Card at the back of the church or pledge online by scanning the QR code below.



Let's deepen our journey together with Jesus as we move into Eastertide. Thank you for your commitment to the life we share in Christ.

*Please note that any recurring online gifts made in 2025 do not roll over and must be set up anew in 2026. Go to [churchoftheincarnation.org/donate](https://churchoftheincarnation.org/donate) to set up your recurring donation today.*

### EVERY WEEK AT INCARNATION

**Sunday Bible Study:** Bible Study is held in the Parish House from 10:00 to 10:40 a.m.

**Sunday School for Children:** During the 11:00 a.m. service, children ages 3 to 9 (pre-K through 4<sup>th</sup> grade) depart the service with their teacher for Sunday School in the Parish House. Learn more about Family Ministries at Incarnation, including offerings for older children, on the church website.

**Wednesday Holy Eucharist:** Join us each Wednesday at 12:15 p.m. for this Rite I spoken service of Holy Eucharist, which includes a brief homily, organ music, and healing prayer with holy oil.

**Thursday Candlelight Communion:** Join us each Thursday at 6:15 p.m. for Candlelight Communion, a service of Holy Eucharist that incorporates chant and silence as well as elements of contemporary worship. This service is informal and contemplative, with music led by a cantor and a brief reflection by one of the clergy. You can also stream this service at [youtube.com/churchoftheincarnation](https://youtube.com/churchoftheincarnation).

**Daily Office:** Services of Morning Prayer and Compline are held via Zoom. To view the weekly schedule, go to [churchoftheincarnation.org/worship](https://churchoftheincarnation.org/worship).