



# Are the Jews responsible for the death of Jesus?

March 2019 'Faithful Questions' Seminar  
Deacon Ken Crawford



**NO!**

# Session overview

- Church statements against this view
  - Nostra Aetate
  - Catechism
- Logical arguments against this view
  - Problems with collective responsibility
  - Problems with inherited responsibility
  - False presumption of doing better
- Why did Christ die?
  - Original sin
  - God's plan
- More evidence
- Reflection for remainder of Lent



# *Nostra Aetate*

- True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures.



# Catechism

- 597 The historical complexity of Jesus' trial is apparent in the Gospel accounts. The personal sin of the participants (Judas, the Sanhedrin, Pilate) is known to God alone. Hence we cannot lay responsibility for the trial on the Jews in Jerusalem as a whole, despite the outcry of a manipulated crowd and the global reproaches contained in the apostles' calls to conversion after Pentecost. Jesus himself, in forgiving them on the cross, and Peter in following suit, both accept "the ignorance" of the Jews of Jerusalem and even of their leaders. Still less can we extend responsibility to other Jews of different times and places, based merely on the crowd's cry: "His blood be on us and on our children!", a formula for ratifying a judicial sentence.



# Collective guilt

- Pope Francis: “There are fundamentalist and violent individuals in all peoples and religions—and with intolerant generalizations they become stronger because they feed on hate and xenophobia. By confronting terror with love, we work for peace.”
- If we are judged individually by God, how could we be collectively judged here on earth?
- Caveat:
  - The Church at various times has supported Affirmative Action and other policies designed to give equal opportunity to groups historically discriminated against.



# Inherited responsibility

“Let his blood be upon us and upon our descendants.”

- The people saying this have no authority to say it
- If there can be no collective guilt, there surely can be no inherited responsibility
- Remember Matthew and others repeating this were themselves Jews.



# False superiority

- Human arrogance extends to presuming we would do the right thing if put in the same situation
  - Think about all the times you've failed in your life
- We underestimate how societal pressures will affect us.
- We also tend to think humanity has “improved” and is “smarter now”





# Why did Christ die?

- Catechism
  - 598 the Church has never forgotten that "sinners were the authors and the ministers of all the sufferings that the divine Redeemer endured." Taking into account the fact that our sins affect Christ himself, the Church does not hesitate to impute to Christians the gravest responsibility for the torments inflicted upon Jesus, a responsibility with which they have all too often burdened the Jews alone
- In others words: He died for **\*EVERYONE'S\*** sin



# Original Sin

- From the very beginning, all humanity was subject to sin
  - Both collectively and personally
- The penalty for sin is death:
  - To the man he said: ... Cursed is the ground\* because of you! In toil you shall eat its yield all the days of your life. ...By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; For you are dust, and to dust you shall return.



# God's plan

- Catechism
  - 599 Jesus' violent death was not the result of chance in an unfortunate coincidence of circumstances, but is part of the mystery of God's plan, as St. Peter explains to the Jews of Jerusalem in his first sermon on Pentecost: "This Jesus [was] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God."
  - 601 After agreeing to baptize him along with the sinners, John the Baptist looked at Jesus and pointed him out as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world". By doing so, he reveals that Jesus is at the same time the suffering Servant who silently allows himself to be led to the slaughter and who bears the sin of the multitudes, and also the Paschal Lamb, the symbol of Israel's redemption at the first Passover. Christ's whole life expresses his mission: "to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
- Pascal lamb -> Sacrificial Lamb used for Passover
- Christ took all of our sins on Himself and paid the penalty (death) for those sins.



# Additional evidence

- Palm Sunday & Good Friday: We are the role of the crowd
- Scripture
  - He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. 1 Peter 2:24
  - For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; 1 Cor 15:3-4
  - “Drink from it, all of you, I for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.” Matt 26:27-28



# Lenten reflection suggestion

- Write down the worst sins of your life
- Go to a Friday exposition of the Eucharist
  - Find a quiet mid-day time
- In front of both Christ in the Eucharist and the Crucifix
  - Read over your list, remembering how you failed
  - Think of what a just punishment would have been
  - Imagine yourself in court, just sentenced to that punishment
  - Imagine Christ coming into the court room and asking that He take your place
  - And then remember that this is exactly what happened when he was crucified
  - Stay with Christ in that very humbling place/mood



# Next month

- 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday – April 23<sup>rd</sup>
  - Normal date is during Holy Week. Pushing back a week.
- 7:30 PM in the Morris Hall
  - As always
- Topic
  - What do eggs and bunnies have to do with the Resurrection?

## Future month topics

- May: pre-submitted Q&A session
- Always looking for suggestions for more topics
  - Interested in changes in style, format, etc. for next year
  - Considering
    - More advice based sessions (as opposed to theological topics)
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday



# Materials

- <http://deaconken.org>
- Slides available on blog
- Check <http://deaconken.org/blog>
- Audio/Video may be available at a later date.

