

# JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS ROBE

*Rob Hall writes...*

*Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"*

Since my teens I have been haunted by video footage of the woman who in the aftermath of the liberation of France in 1945 were accused, rightly or wrongly, of having had relationships with German officers. Whether they had or not - some were prostitutes, some probably just the victims of vendettas - they were stripped, had their heads shaved and were paraded around the towns in which they lived for mockery and revilement.

Those woman are sadly but one example of the terrible human urge to express our anger, hatred, frustration and fury in the humiliation of others. It's something we see time and again throughout history and throughout our world. Sometimes, as in the case of Jesus, it is expressed literally as exposing someone's naked humanity. At other times that exposure is less literal, when people take gleeful delight in humiliating others by exposing private things about them. It is perhaps related to that peculiarly British thing of putting someone - members of the royal family, perhaps - on a pedestal, only to then take delight in tearing them down. In any case it is one of the ugliest expressions of human emotion, of the human tendency to vengefulness or to schadenfreude.

We believe that in his Passion and crucifixion Christ endured the worst of human lovelessness - of human sin - and yet insisted that love would be the final word. In Christ's Passion and crucifixion we see God looking sorrowfully on as his children inflict suffering on one another and yet insists that love will be the final word. I pray today for all in our world who feel exposed, shamed, humiliated; for all who are the victims of the vengeful human urge to humiliate. May they know the love of God which is Christ beside them, saying to them, 'you are still my beloved child'. And for those who humiliate others, that they may see that to seek to expose, shame and humiliate another person is to violate a child of God.