

<sup>16</sup> The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. <sup>17</sup> They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. <sup>18</sup> And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" <sup>19</sup> Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. <sup>20</sup> And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

In this world, the strong have always bullied those they perceive as weak. Any variation from the norm or the recognized majority becomes a reason for mocking, whether it is due to a weak physical stature, lack of athletic prowess, not being cool, having a physical, emotional or mental handicap, being an ethnic minority, observing uncommon religious practices or even belonging to another political party. We are a people without mercy when it comes to dealing with those who bother us by being different. Yet every time we mock our neighbor we are denying that they are also made in the image of God and should by that fact alone demand our respect. Just as when we mock a sculpture we are mocking the sculptor, when we mock a person who is made in the image of God, we are mocking God.

The Roman soldiers had no idea of Who it was that they were mocking. They had no way of knowing because they didn't bother to take the time to find out. The soldiers just did what came naturally to all human beings when confronted with one making claims that were impossible in the context of their expectations.

It would be good if when confronted by one who lives outside our expectations we would remember C.S. Lewis' words in *The Weight of Glory*.

*It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbour...It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddess, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship...Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses. (pp. 45-46)*

**Lord Jesus, as I reflect on the abuse you took from the soldiers before they crucified you, help me to see how often and how far I fall from your command to love my neighbor. Open my eyes to your glory in the face of my neighbor, no matter how different he is from me. Amen.**