



The Crucified Christ
ca. 1150-1200

“Twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head” Mt 27.29

The word coronavirus is very new to most of us but now trips off the tongue because we are all hearing and using it so much. Through sophisticated microscopes, scientists can see that the tiny particles of the virus are spherical and that the surface of each sphere is studded with club-shaped spikes. Images of coronavirus particles now act as a backdrop to countless news bulletins and documentaries. The image is chillingly recognizable and familiar.

It's because of the raised prongs circling its round surfaces that scientists have named this particular virus 'Corona', for corona is the Latin word for crown and, at a time when a very different crown is at the forefront of our minds, it's not difficult to want to see a connection between the two.

In the context of coronavirus, what do we see as we gaze at the crowned, crucified Christ (left)?

A contemporary 'corona' has been superimposed upon a 12th century crucifix from Spain. Not thorns but all the fear and distress and death epitomised by the particle are crowning the dying figure beneath. We especially need to see this crown there in these testing times. Though of course it is already there...

The God who becomes flesh in Jesus inhabits the human condition through and through and shows us that God is not apart and remote but suffering with us in total solidarity, even unto death.

As Michael Sadgrove writes: "He was there. He is there. He will always be there with us and for us, this crucified God who bears the pain of the world on his heart. He is the Christ of Coronavirus. It's what incarnation means."

“To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.”

Karl Barth

Prayer

**Crucified God,
you suffer with and for your people:
in these lonely times of deep distress
sharpen our sense of your
accompanying presence. Amen**