

Holy Week all over the world culminates with a flower-filled, song-filled Easter morning--and especially at Warwick River. We stand outside in a circle singing our hearts out around the cross so full of flowers, it reminds us of the rainbow of promise that Noah experienced.

But not this year.

And not yet.

It's still Good Friday.

Good Friday--my least favorite day of Holy Week. I have never been able to bear that the sun stood still. That the soldiers gambled for Jesus's cloak. That his mother and the other women who loved him were in terrible grief at the foot of the cross. I hated that the disciples pretty much disappeared. That Jesus was mocked. That a sword pierced his side. That he died. That it seemed God had forsaken him. I hated that especially.

This week as I walked in my garden (Where else am I going to walk these days?), I noticed my dogwood trees coming out into bloom. One small tree had especially pristine petals that shone in the morning sun. But another dogwood offered its leaves with a damaged and diseased surface. Small reddish imperfections covered the crumpled petals. It was clearly suffering, in a way that reminded me of the virus that is invading the human race just now.

But the dogwood blossom that appeared to be blood-spattered showed me something else—its four petals taking on the form of the cross. Across the green lawn, I noticed that each flower on the perfectly white dogwood was also making the sign of the cross with its four petals.

Together, the two trees offered me a symbol of hope in the fresh spring air. The unbearable violence and suffering of Jesus is part of our story just as the diseased dogwood is part of nature. The shining white petals of the second dogwood remind me and reassure me that the story will yet come to its climax with healing and resurrection. We are not forsaken.

