At the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, about 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry lived on the US mainland, mostly along the Pacific Coast. About two thirds were full citizens, born and raised in the United States. Following the Pearl Harbor attack, however, a wave of anti-Japanese suspicion and fear led the Roosevelt administration to adopt a drastic policy toward these residents, alien and citizen alike. Virtually all Japanese Americans were forced to leave their homes and property and live in camps for most of the war. The government cited national security as justification for this policy although it violated many of the most essential constitutional rights of Japanese Americans.

Both the Office of Naval Intelligence and the Federal Bureau of Investigation felt the remaining Japanese American population did not pose a significant threat to national security.

The public, however, was not convinced. Japanese victories in Guam, Malaya, and the Philippines helped fuel anti-Japanese-American hysteria, as did a January 1942 report claiming that Japanese Americans had given vital information to the Japanese government ahead of the Pearl Harbor attack. Many Pacific Coast citizens worried that local Japanese Americans

might help the Japanese military launch attacks in their region. Walter Lippmann, a journalist whose columns were carried by newspapers across the United States, argued that the only reason Japanese Americans had not yet been caught plotting an act of sabotage was that they were waiting to strike when it would be most effective. Another influential columnist, Westbrook Pegler, put it more bluntly: “The Japanese in California should be under armed guard to the last man and woman right now and to hell with habeas corpus until the danger is over.”

Not everyone felt this way though.

In San Francisco, there were two families who lived close to one another. One had emigrated from Japan and settled at the turn of the century near San Francisco, and they established a business in which they grew roses and trucked them into San Francisco three mornings a week.

The other family was a naturalized family from Switzerland who also marketed roses, and both families became modestly successful, as their roses were known in the markets of San Francisco for their long vase-life.

For almost four decades the two families were neighbors, and the sons took over the farms, but then on December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Although the rest of the family members were Americans, the father of the Japanese family had never been naturalized. in the turmoil and the questions about internment camps, his neighbor made it clear that, if necessary, he would look after his friend's nursery. It was something each family had learned in church: love thy neighbor as thyself. "You would do the same thing for us," he told his Japanese friend.

It was long long before the Japanese family was transported to a barren landscape in Granada, Colorado. The relocation center consisted of tar-paper-roofed barracks surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards.

A full year went by. Then two. Then three. While the Japanese neighbors were in internment, their friends worked in the greenhouses, the children before school and on Saturdays; and the father's work often stretched to 16 and 17 hours a day. And then one day, when the war in Europe had ended, the Japanese family packed up and boarded a train. They were going home.

What would they find? The family was met at the train depot by their neighbors, and when they got to their home, the whole Japanese family stared. There was the nursery, intact, scrubbed and shining in the sunlight - neat, prosperous and healthy.

So was the balance in the bank passbook handed to the Japanese father. And the house was just as clean and welcoming as the nursery.

And there on the dining room table was one perfect red rosebud, just waiting to unfold - the gift of one neighbor to another.

The story is one that shows the power of our capacity for good, amidst a time where there was so much hate and animosity. Hate, racism, scapegoating; it's nothing new. War brings it out. So do hard times. In many respects we as humans are like the people in the crowd with palms welcoming Jesus; they are with him one minute, but then soon thereafter they turn on him. I wonder how many people, when World War II broke out did the same to their neighbors who may have been Japanese.

Looks though can be deceiving. For some, they look at humanity and have such little hope and see the evil. And indeed the evil, all on display for us in the passion, and when humanity is at it's worst, is there. But into this comes our Lord. Freely laying down His life. Confronting the ugliness of sin. Redeeming us.

Many have asked why did Jesus have to die? Of course He had free will. And He could have come down from the Cross. But God wanted to show us how deeply we are loved. He wanted to enter into humanity completely and stand with us, and show us that all of us were loved and forgiven.

As we enter into this week, I'd invite you to think about how deeply you are loved. All of us in our lives experience things like rejection, hate, betrayal and hurt. And all of us at one point look at our lives and think why did I do that, or why do I still do this, and perhaps cover it up or try not to think about it. Sin though always comes out one way or another. But in this, there need not be fear, just love, a willingness to let go, to let God, and let Him into your life. Look at the Eucharist as we come to Holy Thursday and remind yourself God is there with you. Come on Good Friday and hear the Passion again from John and touch the cross and remind yourself, God is

with you. And come to the vigil or on Easter and see the lighted Paschal candle and remind yourself, God never abandons you and leads us through the darkness into the light.

But with this, this week invites us to challenge ourselves. To look at the ugliness that crops up in our lives, and in this world, and do something about it. So many are like the mob shouting “crucify Him”; whether it was some turning on Japanese Americans in World War II, or others today hating over political beliefs or other differences. But God sees our potential. Each of us can be like that Swiss family who were the Japanese family’s neighbors; seeing not an opportunity to make money or eliminate their competition, but a commandment to do what Jesus did for us. What power we have to make this world a better place through our actions of love and mercy and to bring light into the darkness. Jesus shows us the way.

Like the apostles who scatter and hide when the rock is rolled in front of the tomb, so too do so many in the world. We know how the story will end though, with Jesus bringing peace to His friends when He sees them again. Let us do the same, not being afraid, but coming to know this love of our

Lord and glorify Him by bringing this hope to a world that needs to see it more than ever.