

Good Friday - St Johns Passion - 15th April 2022

Hanging in my room on the wall is the crucifix. The cross is made of wood and the figure of Jesus is porcelain, the figure of Jesus is chipped, the right hand is broken, one of the nails is missing, so Jesus is held on the cross by Sellotape.

The cross speaks of sacrifice, pain and struggle, it's been through the wars.

When I look at Jesus, I see a person who knows what its like to suffer; the execution by Crucifixion was the cruellest form of killing that the Romans could devise, it also included his scourging, crowning with thorns, being beaten, spat upon and forced to carry a cross through the streets of Jerusalem, and onto the hill of Golgotha, otherwise known as Calvary. Not only that, Jesus, denied food and water, was then nailed to the cross, whereas the other criminals crucified were tied, and he hung upon the cross from 6am to 3pm, nine hours of suffering, ending in affixation and death; naked, deprived of everything.

In the midst of his suffering; we witness the measure of his love as he knows his Mother Mary is at the foot of the Cross along with his disciple St John, he asks them to care for each other.

The re telling of Jesus' Passion in St Johns Gospel on Good Friday, reminds us of all that Jesus endured for our sake as God and man.

As a priest, ordained in to the 'persona Christi', it presents the challenge of laying down my own life for Christ - A clerical minister of religion do I really know what suffering and sacrifice is? When I look around at the world today, 2,000 years since Calvary and the Cross, - There is a different form of Calvary - of which I am relatively unscathed, there is since Ash Wednesday the outbreak of War in Ukraine with all the horrors that comes with it. There is the continued suffering from the global pandemic of Covid 19, and how it

has claimed over 5 million lives around the world, nearly equivalent to the whole population of Scotland.

There is the continued effect of climate change, especially on the poorest people in the world; typhoons in the Philippines, Bush Fires and droughts in Australia, Greece and California, - Major famine and starvation in East Africa, - Floods in South Africa, India and Bangladesh, starvation in Ethiopia. Fuel poverty, energy crisis, inflation, the rising cost of living, foodbanks and families struggling to feed their children, in the midst of it all, drug addiction is spiralling in our towns and cities and the NHS is struggling to cope with emergency and long-term health care, including mental illness.

You could argue that the crucified Christ is still very much with us; and the Church as Servant is called to come to the aid of the poor and the broken hearted, the Catholic Church is rightly the biggest Non-Government Aid Agency in the world. Our two parishes continue, through your generosity to carry out much aid relief near and far, not necessarily financial also in works of mercy.

What life has taught me, re the Cross of Jesus, that we must never forget that He died for Our Good; for the Good of the World, for the Good of our souls. The big danger for us today is to forget the cross, to ignore the message of Christ Our Lord. When I see blood brothers fighting in their own home over drugs, or a 16 year old dying in hospital from suicide, - or children being moved from one house to another because their parents are separated, - or the Church itself divided because different clergy have different ideas of what the Church should be... it all brings us back to the Cross. - Remember, what Jesus done for us all. - If we choose not to hasten the "end times of Our World" we must die to self in order to live for others. To sacrifice my needs to fulfil the needs of my neighbour.

On this Good Friday let us remind ourselves of what Jesus laid down as a mandate to become a true disciple - "Anyone who wants to be a

follower of mine, must deny himself, take up his Cross and follow me"
- "And again, Anyone who chooses to lose his life for my sake will save it". As it also says in the letter to the Hebrews (chapter 9)
"How much more effectively the blood of Christ, who offered himself as the perfect sacrifice to God through the eternal Spirit, can purify our inner self from Dead Actions, so that we do our service to the living God. -

I will finish with the first words of an ancient song for Good Friday

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"Sing, my tongue, of warfare ended,
Of the Victors Laurelled crown,
Let the cross, his trophy splendid
Be the theme of high renown
How a broken world was mended
Life restored by Life laid down"

Canon Jeremy Bath