

Homily - Sunday 14th March 2021 – 4th Sunday of Lent

“Damaged Goods”

When we were children, we loved to show off our scars to our friends. Like the one on my knee from a bike crash, or the one on my finger from woodwork class gone wrong. I remember once an old soldier showing me the scar where a bullet passed through his lower leg. Life in general produces its own scars, physical, mental and spiritual, some too awful to contemplate. Just by immersing ourselves in the world we risked being scarred. Many people would say they've been scarred by the whole experience of Covid, or perhaps the shock of losing our jobs or even more seriously taking ill ourselves with Covid; every trauma of life leaves a legacy behind.

Jesus is, as you know scarred by his life on earth. The most obvious scars are the wounds from the nail on the cross, the crowning with thorns, the scourging at the pillar and the soldiers spear stabbed into his side. These permanent wounds are shown to his disciples after he has risen from the dead. There are other scars that are hidden from the naked eye: the scars of the death of Joseph, the death of John the Baptist, the rejection of the crowd who shout 'Crucify Him!', the face of his sorrowful mother, the betrayal of Judas Iscariot and more besides....

But Jesus knew it had to be that way and he was prepared to sacrifice his life out of love for the world. Hence the prophetic parable of when the grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies it produces a rich harvest. So, likewise, the dying of the seed of Jesus. Life on the cross, will be destined to produce a rich harvest of salvation for the world – his wounds will help to heal our wounds and bring about the Holy Eucharist.

It is a truism to state that only when someone dies for our sake do, we learn the lessons of life and death and what really matters. You could say that the crucifix is a permanent scar on the face of the world. It's a scar of sacrifice and suffering, but also a scar of love and redemption. It's a scar of revelation of how determined God is to save us from sin and death and bring us in unified Communion.

The paradox being those who are prepared to lose their lives in this world will save them for eternal life. There are many examples of this too in the lives of the prophets and saints, but also I'm sure in our own families. We are not inspired by cowards but we are by courageous women, men and children too; who give their lives in the cause of someone else; the ripples go on long after they pass into the hands of God.

I saw that in my own dear father who was prepare to give everything he had to care for my mum until he was physically unable to do anymore, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health till death do us part. The legacy of that life well lived is, 'Keep doing what is right, no matter what the cost'. – an inspiration!

As we think and pray for the Confirmation candidates today at Mass; in these very strange times that we live; we pray that they will keep doing what is right throughout their lives; no matter what life brings, and the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of God will help them overcome the trails and scars of life; making them grow stronger in their inmost selves.

To be confirmed in your faith means making a firm 'YES' to Jesus, that I truly seek to be one of your disciples, whatever the cost.

God Bless you all.

Fr Jeremy Bath