

REFLECTION FOR GOOD FRIDAY, 2021

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9 John 18:1-19:42

We often expect to find God in what is beautiful. We don't expect to find God on Good Friday, his body broken upon the cross.

On that Good Friday, as Jesus' blood flows over the wood of the cross, there, at the foot of the cross, Jesus sees some of the faithful women. He sees the disciple whom he loved, John. He sees... his mother, Mary.

He says, "Behold, your son." "Behold, your mother."

Jesus, even in the moment of supreme weakness and suffering, he was still thinking of others? Someone had to care for His mom. He is teaching us that we don't need to be strong in order to still do good for others?

Jesus is showing us that the point of life is not to make more – it's to give more! It's not to have more – it's to serve more!

Even in our sufferings we must be willing to serve, to serve our imperfect wife, imperfect husband, imperfect family members, to serve imperfect neighbours, to serve people who don't deserve our love. And willing to do the thankless task...pouring away our love in service.

There are times when life throws us completely unfair suffering, loss, pain... or at someone we love. There are times when we look up and cry out for someone to rescue us, or to show us how to save or help the one we love.

And we can't.

But the last loving thing we can do is to be there, in solidarity, to witness.

The cross is heart-breaking. Every mother knows that watching your child suffer and die is beyond heart-breaking.

On that Good Friday, Mary saw her son was dying. Jesus saw his mother suffering, crying. In that moment, they could not change the outcome which had been brought about by sin. But they were there. With each other. For each other. Son of God. Mother of God. There for each other.

What does that Friday we call "Good" tells us?

Good Friday tells us that Jesus is present. He sees. And he loves.

Jesus is present, in every cemetery where people tearfully bury their loved ones.

Jesus is present, in every place where human dignity is dismissed, where hearts are broken, where hope disappears.

When we carry life's crosses, our hope comes from the One who carries the cross with us.

+ When we failed to love all those in our lives who are hard to deal with, and say to the Lord, I failed to love. God says to us, "no, this is not a failure day, from the cross, I'm teaching you how to love with the heart of Jesus."

+ When we say to the Lord, Lord, people hurt us, abuse us, disrespect us, and we know you want us to forgive them, but Lord, today we failed to forgive. And God says, "no, this is not a failure day, because I'm showing you, from the cross, that forgiveness is possible."

+ when we are very much aware of our sins, our failure to live the Gospel, and how selfishness rules our lives. We feel so guilty. But God says to us today, "I forgive you. Because when I show you your sins, I'm showing you how to leave them behind, so that you can move forward to glory."

What do we actually see when we look at the cross? We can choose to see it from two different ways. We can choose to see Jesus broken, tortured on a cross. We can see the cross as a story of brutality, of failure and of despair.

We can also see the cross through the lens of the Resurrection and see the cross as the emblem of love and the sign of our salvation. Jesus died on the cross for us because he loved and loved too much. Jesus shows us that we are lovable enough to die for. The cross is the story of triumph: the victory of love over hatred, the victory of hope over despair, the victory of life over death.

Good Friday teaches us that those who care for the poor, those who take a stand against injustice, those who seek to bring peace and yet suffer, can find joy precisely in the stress and strain of our self-giving for the well-being of others.

Today, in the tragedy of a pandemic, in the face of the many false securities that have now crumbled, in the face of so many hopes betrayed, in our fears, in our anxiety, in our panic, in our suffering, in our sickness, Jesus says to each one of us: "courage, don't give up, come on. Follow me. We'll do this together."

May Jesus' victory on the cross fill us with the courage to persevere in times of difficulty and the hope to see beyond the cross to the joy of the Resurrection.

"Jesus, remember us, when you come into your kingdom."

Fr Patrick