



Good Friday

Homily

**Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth**

**Friday 29 March, 2013
St Mary's Cathedral, Perth**

As we gather once again to celebrate the mystery of the Lord's suffering and death, I would like to welcome you all to St Mary's Cathedral. Our celebration this afternoon is stark and unadorned for we are remembering a death, and a particularly cruel one at that. It is true that many of us will gather together again tomorrow night or on Sunday to celebrate this same man's resurrection from the dead and therefore our liturgy this afternoon, full of sadness as it is, nevertheless carries with it a seed of hope for we know how the story ends.

It is important though that we allow today to speak for itself and not rush too quickly to the celebration of the resurrection. The reason for this, of course, is that the resurrection of Jesus makes no sense without the death of Jesus which we recall this afternoon. But it is equally true that the death of Jesus ultimately makes no sense unless it leads to the resurrection. If death has the final word in the story of Jesus, then that story is one of failure and despair and this makes no sense to Christians for we are a people of hope and of faith in the power of love to overcome the power of evil. If the story of Jesus is not a story of a love that triumphs, then the story of Jesus offers us nothing but empty promises and futile hope.

In order to understand the death of Jesus we need to remember the story of his life. We cannot tell it all here this afternoon, but it is important for us to recall the basic elements of our faith. We believe that Jesus was much more than simply a good man, or even the very best man who has ever lived. Our faith is that Jesus is the Son of God, as the centurion proclaims in today's gospel. We believe that he was sent by his Father in order to reveal the face of God to us. In all that he did, all that he said, and all that he was, Jesus made known to us a God of extraordinary compassion, gentleness, forgiveness and fidelity. He made know to us in other words a God of love – a God who is love. When he reached out to the broken, to the despised and rejected, to the sinners and the outcasts, to the poor and the simple, he showed us the heart of God. And because no-one had ever dared believe before that God could be like this, Jesus set people's hearts on fire and filled them with hope. If Jesus was right – if God really was like this – then this was a God to believe in, this was a God to entrust myself to, this was a God to love.

When those for whom goodness and love were too threatening managed to destroy Jesus, or so it seemed, the hope which had been born in people's hearts was also destroyed. People had



begun to believe that Jesus might be right about God. But Jesus must have been wrong, for how could a God of compassion and love allow his Son to die? As Jesus died on the cross the faith and hope of His disciples must have begun to die within them as well. The first Good Friday, and the empty Saturday that followed it, must have been days of despair and dejection for the people who had put their faith in Jesus, especially his closest disciples. They must have thought to themselves that all this talk of a loving compassionate God really was after all too good to be true.

It is into this despair that the resurrection will break like the dawn after a long and bleak night. And it is only then that the first disciples will begin to understand that love was at work in every part of Jesus' story, even in his death. They will begin to see that all that Jesus said about God as a loving father and good shepherd, and all that Jesus did in his care for the poor and the suffering, were an expression of God's love – a love that Jesus, God among us, showed particularly in his last days and in his death as he remained faithful, even in the midst of suffering, to the task he had been given to reveal the face of God and to show that nothing we can do can destroy the love God has for us.

As we contemplate the suffering and death of Jesus this afternoon, we are invited to see God's love at work, even in this story of apparent failure, degradation and sorrow. We are invited to remember that this kind of suffering is no stranger even to God, and that when we find ourselves living through such moments ourselves, we are not separated from God for he is close to us in the person of Jesus who suffers with us and in us. And most of all we are invited to remember that God can and does bring life out of death and hope out of despair. As we leave the Cathedral later this afternoon let us carry this conviction with us: our God is a God of compassion and mercy who never leaves us in despair but always holds out to us the hope of new life, even when that new life must come, as it did for Jesus, only through suffering and sorrow.

We adore you O Christ and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.