



## **Good Friday 2020**

### **Homily**

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**Friday 10 April 2020  
St Mary's Cathedral, Perth**

On this Good Friday, as we commemorate the death of the Lord, we know that the experience of death and of bereavement, which is always difficult and painful, is much more so at this moment because our normal way of grieving is largely denied to us. Perhaps only a few of us have lost people in these last few days and weeks. Some others among us may, perhaps, experience this in the weeks to come. But all of us, united as we are in a community of faith, can join in prayer for those who are saddened at the death of a family member, a friend, or a much respected neighbour or colleague.

We are very conscious that those who are grieving cannot gather with family and friends to entrust the one they have loved to the Lord through the beauty and dignity of our funeral rites. They cannot put their arms around each other in the gestures of sympathy and support which are so important at such a time. They cannot meet over refreshments to share their stories, and their tears, and remind each other of the gift that the one who has died has been to them. Our prayerful support for them can help them through this difficult time.

Today's reading of the gospel reminds us that this terrible experience of loss was part of the lives of the mother of Jesus and of His disciples. It is hard to imagine the depths of distress which Mary must have felt as she watched her Son die in such a cruel fashion. It is hard not to be aware of the courage and devotion of the beloved disciple who stood with Mary at the foot of the cross. And it is also hard to condemn too easily or quickly the other disciples whose courage failed them at that last moment as they saw all their hopes in Jesus dashed before their eyes. In a sense death reveals our impotence to us and our poverty. We are not really in charge of our lives or ourselves as much as we thought we were.

Perhaps this poverty is revealed most starkly in the cry of Jesus from the cross, which we read about in the gospels of both Mark and Matthew; *My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?* We know, of course, that God had not abandoned Jesus and that, as Saint Luke's gospel reminds us, Jesus went to His death in trusting faith: *Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.* And yet, the anguished cry of Jesus also reveals the depths of His suffering. It is possible, strangely, to be overwhelmed by our suffering and yet, at a deeper level, to be held together by our trusting faith. We do not always understand God's ways, and this can cause us deep distress, but in faith we can release ourselves into God's love with confidence: and if we do this often enough in the course of our life, just as Jesus did, we will know how to do it when we face our death.



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In a time of crisis such as we are living through at the moment it is good for us to remember that we are not alone. Some of the disciples may have abandoned Jesus for a time, but God does not abandon us, His people, in our pain and confusion. God comes to us in the midst of this experience and reassures us that He is with us. We are, after all, God's beloved sons and daughters.

We can remember, too, that as He was dying Jesus entrusted his mother to His beloved disciple and the disciple to His mother. From its earliest beginnings the Church has always known that in giving Mary as mother to the beloved disciple, Jesus was giving Mary as mother to every disciple. As Pope Francis reminds us so clearly, both in words and in actions, Mary accompanies us on our journey of faith. She is one to whom we can turn with confidence and trust. She is the Mother of the Lord's Church. She is the Help of Christians. We ask her so often to pray for us, now and at the hour of our death. Do we really imagine Mary will not respond to this prayer? She knows what it is to suffer through love. United now with the Lord in heaven she continually prays for all her children – and the Lord listens to her prayers.

Today's liturgy ends in silence and that silence stretches across tonight and into Holy Saturday. It is the silence of death, yes, but it is also a silence in which the first stirrings of hope begin to arise. They will burst forth tomorrow night when once again, even in the midst of the crisis in which the world now finds itself, the light of the risen Christ will appear, scattering the darkness and renewing our faith and our trust. So let us leave this liturgy with the words of the prophet Isaiah ringing in our ears and echoing in our hearts: *Do not be afraid, I am with you. I have called you by your name. You are mine.* (cf. Isaiah 41:10; 43:1).