



Good Friday

Homily

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**Friday 2 April 2021
St Mary's Cathedral, Perth**

"I was born for this, I came into the world for this, to be a witness to the truth, and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice".

These words of Jesus are in response to Pilate's question about Jesus being a king. In the context of the times it is a loaded question for in a land occupied by the Romans only they could install a king. For that reason, to claim to be a king is to threaten Rome's authority. Jesus has already pointed out that his kingdom is not a worldly kingdom, and now he makes very clear in what sense he is a king. His authority, his kingly rule, is based on his claim that he is a witness to the truth and that only in his kingdom can be found the truth that leads to freedom and life.

Pilate cannot understand this, of course, for he can only think of kings and kingdoms in terms of his own experience. But the gospel is not written for unbelievers, or at least not for those whose hearts are closed to faith. Rather the gospel is written as the author himself says *"so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name"*.

What is this truth of which Jesus speaks and to which he has come to bear witness? It is, of course, the truth proclaimed in every page of the gospel, the truth which Jesus identifies with himself when he says, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life"*.

This truth is expressed at the very beginning of John's Gospel. *"The Word was made flesh,"* we read in chapter one. *"He lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth"*.

The truth to which Jesus bears witness is the truth about God himself: about who God is, about who we are, and about what it means to live our lives in openness to and in communion with the very source of our life.

"No one has ever seen God," we are told in the first chapter of the Gospel. *"It is his only Son who is nearest to the Father's heart who has made him known"*.



This is the great beauty and the great mystery of our Christian faith. In Jesus, in his life, his preaching, his miracles, his encounters with people, and especially in his suffering, death and resurrection, God is made known. When Jesus tells us the parable of the Prodigal Son and the extraordinary love, forgiveness and hospitality of the Father, **God is made known**. When Jesus encounters the woman caught in adultery and says to her, *“I do not condemn you; go now and sin no more”*, **God is made known**. When Jesus is so critical of those religious leaders who do not practice what they preach **God is made known**. When Jesus says, *“Come to me if you labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest”*, **God is made known**. As Jesus is dying in agony on the cross because he refused to step away from what he believed, and he cries out, *“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”*, **God is made known**. When the risen Jesus appears to his disciples and says to them, *“As the Father sent me, so I am sending you”*, **God is made known**.

This is the truth to which Jesus bears witness. This is the truth which Pilate could not grasp and some of the religious leaders of the time could not accept. This is the truth that so many people of our own time regard as a fantasy or a delusion. But this is the truth to which every page of the gospel bears witness. This is the truth for which countless martyrs across the last 2000 years, and still today, die. This is the truth which lies at the heart of all the works of mercy, compassion and justice which are part of the life of our Church. This is the truth which enables people to approach the end of their lives and the mystery of death with hope, with trust, in faith and even with confidence and joy.

As we gaze upon the Lord hanging on the cross let us see there an icon of God’s overwhelming love for us. And as we leave the Cathedral today, let us do so with a renewed trust in the love and mercy of God who, just as he raised Jesus from the dead, will also raise us from the emptiness of our sins to the fullness of life, both now and when we pass through the gates of death into the Lord’s presence.