



**Fifth Sunday of Lent Year B
Centenary Anniversary Mass - St Kieran's Primary School**

Homily

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

**21 March 2021
St Kieran's Osborne Park Parish**

"We should like to see Jesus."

These words in this morning's Gospel, from a group of Greek-speaking people, occupy a special place in St John's gospel. They come not long before Jesus will enter into his passion and death, and they are a reminder to us that Jesus came, not just for the Jewish people, but for everybody. It is as if Jesus reaches a new moment of decision when he hears that it is not just the Jews who are wanting to encounter him, perhaps out of curiosity but also, for many of them, in the hope that he might actually be the messiah for whom they have waited so long, but now also the Greeks, who in this instance represents the non-Jewish world. The mission of Jesus is now clearly seen to be universal, to be for everyone. And as this realisation dawns, not so much on Jesus for, of course, Jesus is well aware of this, but on his disciples, Jesus proclaims that now his hour has come. He begins to speak of himself as the grain of wheat which must die in order for the harvest to grow. He speaks of himself as one who must lose his life in order to enter into his real life. He speaks of himself as one who is about to be glorified, although that glory will come through suffering and death, not through worldly honours, riches and popular acclaim. And lastly, and most importantly, he speaks of his imminent death, his *"lifting up on the cross"*, as the way in which all the scattered children of God, not only the Jews but every human being, will be drawn to him.

As the story of Jesus's crucifixion will make clear, and it is the story we will listen to next week when we celebrate Palm Sunday, not everyone who will be drawn to the cross will be drawn by faith. Some will be drawn by a thirst for blood. Some will be drawn to mock and scorn. Some will be drawn to gloat over what they see as their victory over this deluded and dangerous man. But as well as all these people we will also find two figures who, though they are largely alone in their suffering at the foot of the cross, represent all those who, then and ever since, have recognised the truth in the words of Jesus: *I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life*. Those two figures, of course, are Mary the Mother of Jesus and the Beloved Disciple.



But what a challenging way this way of Jesus is. How unexpected is the truth he reveals. And what a wonderful life he offers us, if we can only find the courage to open our arms and our hearts to receive it.

The way of Jesus is challenging because it is a way of self-forgetfulness, of generous and total self-giving, and of a kind of humble courage which recognises how weak and fallible we are ourselves but which believes that what might be impossible for us alone, or even together, becomes possible when we walk each day with the Lord beside us, with the Lord in our minds and in our hearts.

The truth of Jesus is unexpected because it tells us of God whose love for us is so great as to be, really, unimaginable. Last week we heard in the gospel that God loves the world, that is loves us, so much that he sent his only Son so that all those who believe in him might not be lost but might have eternal life. We all know something of love. We all, hopefully, have people who love us and people whom we love. When we hear that God loves us we have, therefore, some sense of what it means. But for God to care so much that in Jesus he takes on our broken and fragile humanity, and then puts himself at our mercy in order to reveal his face of love to us, only to be led to his cruel and bitter death on the cross - this is a love that knows no limits - a love that is prepared to give everything. Most of us will spend most of our lives trying to believe that God really loves us this much - but it is true, and our celebration of Easter each year is the Lord's invitation to us to remember, and believe.

When we do begin to walk this challenging way of Jesus, and when we do dare ourselves to believe that God really does love us in this extraordinary way, then we begin to experience a new depth of joy and of hope in our living. We find ourselves being set free from all those things which have been holding us back from living life to the full - living life as God intended that it be lived.

This is the promise of our faith: it is the promise of Easter. And it is the faith and the promise, the Good News that St Kieran's school has been communicating to so many young people over the last one hundred years. Very few people would argue with the idea that any school exists in order to help prepare a child for life. St Kieran's, like every Catholic school, exists because we believe that at the heart of any complete preparation for life, if it is to be really lived to the full, must be a deep understanding of God's love, God's abiding presence, and God's call. This morning we thank God that this school exists, that it still stands firmly on its Catholic foundations, and that it will continue to be a community which, because it wants only the best for its children, will continue to share with today's children, and those to come in the future, that Jesus really is the way for them to follow, the truth upon which they can rely, and the life God is calling them to live and enjoy to the full.