



Good Friday

Homily

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**Friday 29 March, 2024
St Mary's Cathedral, Perth**

Once again, as we do every year, we gather on this day which we call Good Friday, to recall the brutal and unjust execution of a man who throughout his life did nothing but good for others.

Our world, of course, with its patterns of behaviour which often play out in our own lives, is not unfamiliar with this reality. It is one of the strangest paradoxes of our human situation that good people are so often treated very badly by others. There is a cruelty and a vindictiveness, or perhaps simply a blind thoughtlessness, which is sometimes found in the best of us, and which comes to the surface when we feel ourselves threatened, or ill-treated, or disregarded and disrespected.

Our Christian tradition calls this kind of thing *sin*, not so much because it breaks a divine law, but because it undermines, distorts and sometimes even comes very close to destroying our identity as people whose life itself is a gift from God. This gift, given by God, is also a task. Only we, of all the marvelous realities God has created, have been made in God's divine image: not the birds of the air, not the fish in the sea, not the animals that roam the face of the earth, but only we human beings, young and old, male and female, strong and weak, in all the wonderful variety of humanity, are created to be and meant in God's plan to be on the earth the living icons, the living images, of the life-giving, life-loving, and life-sustaining God.

Once we begin to understand this, we begin to realise just how shocking the torture and execution of Jesus really is. We believe that, in Jesus, God is among us as one of us. The life-giving, life-loving, life-sustaining God takes flesh and comes among us so that in encountering Jesus we encounter God; in listening to Jesus, we listen to God; in coming to know and then to love Jesus, we are coming to know and love God.

What does humanity do when, in Jesus, it encounters this God of life and love? Humanity, in the person of those who in reality acted in our name, seeks to destroy this God of life and love. And why? Because the kind of love which Jesus embodies in every word He speaks and every action He takes is so demanding, and so confronting, and so challenging, that we become frightened and, in our fear, prefer to push away and even destroy what frightens us, rather than recognise it



for what it is: the way to the fullness of life, and the fullness of love, and the fullness of our humanity.

Good Friday is a day when the Church invites us not to run away from this hard reality: not to give in to our fear and seek to remove God from our lives; not to resign ourselves to the selfishness which so often determines our thoughts and actions; not to give up on striving to reach the ideal of human life and love which Jesus, who is God among us, has revealed to us.

For the good news is, of course, that when humanity had done its worst, seeking to wipe out forever the demanding call from God for us to live up to our identity as living images of God's presence in the world, God intervened to show us that, as Saint Paul once put it, *God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom and God's weakness is stronger than human strength* (1 Cor 1:25).

It is not impossible for us to be the life-giving, life-loving, life-sustaining people that God has created us to be. Jesus has shown us the way, and we can follow. But not only has He shown us the way: He has become our way. He invites us to put our hand in His, just as Simon Peter, when he was sinking beneath the waves, put out his hand to grasp that of Jesus who lifted him to safety. Saint Paul said it all: *I can do all things in Christ, who strengthens me* (Phil 4:13). Let Christ be your strength; let Him be your hope; let Him be your salvation.