

How do we sit today? How do we breathe?

The story which we have just watched is so powerful – so confronting! And while the text is word for word as we could have read it ourselves – there is something about the images which makes it even more confronting and challenging. This is not a fictional story – or a story where the biblical context masks what is happening – this is a recount of events which are painful to sit with.

All week I was determined to have everything ready for the triduum by Wednesday evening so that I could take the time to be in the moment through the three most important days of the Christian year. I had come to this decision after last year when I seemed to be constantly thinking about the next event, the next liturgy and whether everything was prepared. This year instead I wanted to ensure that I could be – that I could be mindful and prayerful at every step of the journey. It has been a challenge, because at one level you want to skip onto the next moment.

Good Friday has much of that. We want to skip over the pain of betrayal and torture, over the death and burial to the resurrection we know is coming. But if we skip too fast we miss the

journey – we miss what we might learn of God and of ourselves in sitting in the most solemn of days.

When I was a young adult I remember going to listen to one of those America style televangelists preach about Easter. Throughout his Good Friday sermon every paragraph ended with the phrase ‘It’s Friday – but Sunday is coming’! Well it is, but Friday is also important and we need to make the space to sit in its uncomfortableness. So often in life we are focused on the next event. One of the disciplines of Holy Week, and indeed the Triduum (the liturgical events between Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday, is that we stay in the moment. We honour the point in the story – in the liturgy – and we are not in a hurry to reach the next chapter.

Good Friday is a day of Lament – it is a day which acknowledges the pain that God feels – but also reflects upon the pain and suffering, even the grief that we have experienced in life. On a day when God may seem furthest away – God is actually closest. God knows our pain, knows our grief – because God too experiences these – not just once but always.

The writer to the Hebrews explained this to us earlier – we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. (Heb 4:15) Christ knew what it was to suffer! In the account of Jesus final hours which we watched, we see a man – embracing the full weakness of humanity. Not the weakness of failure or inability – but the weakness that speaks of honesty and hope. For in this moment of Christ crucifixion the power of God is revealed in the weakness of our humanity and our experience of suffering.

We relate to God in this moment of the crucifixion because it connects with our own human experience. The times when we are empty and drained - Jesus in his passion experiences the world at its emptiest. In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus looks for the comfort of his friends and his companions – only to be disappointed.

He cries out to God in pain if there is any way - take this cup away from me – only to have to come to terms with the reality that there is no turning from this path. An experience that is very human – can you think of a time when you have cried out

to God – isn't there another way – only to know that this is the journey that you must take.

There are moments in the recount of Christ's final hours when He appears almost hysterical and filled with fear – until he comes to the moment when he must accept his death in isolation and silence. As we journey with Christ through this passion we must also ask ourselves – what parts of our lives fill us with fear? Are there things about ourselves and our situation that we must learn to accept or address?

For Christ, the answer to this question has an eternal answer – Jesus had to accept his death for in this, Christ is made known to us each day in the breaking of his body. Christ was broken for us – and it is this brokenness that we join with Christ, and all those who believe, throughout all time and space, in the Eucharist.

It is somewhat ironic liturgically that the one day in the year when we may not celebrate the Eucharist is the very day that we remember the brokenness of Christ body. The words of the Eucharist prayer are not spoken for they are enacted for us in the passion of Christ. While we will share in the Eucharist in one kind, the words

of institution are left unsaid – for we stand in the shadow of the cross – and we are asked to enter into the fullness of Christ sacrifice. Maybe it is for this reason the desolation of Good Friday is even more intense. We cannot be rescued from the reality of humanities weakness – rather we must sit with Christ in his brokenness.

In a few moments the cross will be lifted before us and as it is processed around the church we will respond to the acclamation ‘The Cross of Christ’ with ‘**come let us worship**’. We will each be invited to come and knee before the cross and kiss it as a reminder of our own humanity within God – something we share with Jesus. But also as we come before the cross we recognise the weakness of our humanity and our desire for the love God which will sustain us in our life.

Nothing today in many ways makes sense. The language of Good Friday seems foreign as we speak of salvation and necessary death. And yet, there is something in Good Friday that is beyond the logic of our brains, beyond the literal which speaks the depths of our soul and spirit. And that’s OK. Maybe one of the lessons of sitting in the depths of Good Friday is about letting go of

our need to understand or make sense of what is happening. Sometimes grief just needs to be that – grief.

As we end our liturgy today we will sing the hymn ‘My song is love unknown’ – it is a poem and a prayer – and maybe one which will sustain us today. It concludes like this:

**Here might I stay and sing,
no story so divine:
never was love, dear King,
never was grief like thine.
This is my friend,
in whose sweet praise
I all my days
could gladly spend.**

May God embrace us – body, mind and spirit as we sit today in the presence of the story that is unfolding. Amen.