

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

This Good Friday is like none other that any of us have ever experienced. Even if we have gone away on holiday or even stayed home in years before, we all knew we could come to church to worship if we wanted to on this most profound of Christian days. This year, unlike any other year in living memory, we may not come together in church, we may not observe the ancient traditions of hearing scripture read, of acknowledging the cross, of praying the solemn prayers. The Good Friday liturgy is one of the most formal services we observe in this church. And I think at this time of crisis it grounds us in the fundamentals of our faith.

On Palm Sunday I spoke about the humility of Christ, the quality that characterised his ministry. This quality was expressed on Maundy Thursday at the table of the Last Supper when he knelt before the disciples and washed their feet. Alongside this example of humble service, he gave the new commandment – love one another. The command is so basic, so primal, so necessary. Love one another. Many times, people express the command to love through simple acts. Love need not be complex. Sometimes it's just about reaching a hand toward another to help...

Yet for now, we may not touch a person other than those in our homes, our spouses or children. The helping hand must hold back, find other ways. How human beings ache for touch. Without the touch of another it is hard to flourish. Did Jesus long for the touch of his friends, his mother? He had been bruised and beaten and his skin would have longed for gentle healing hands. Did he long for his Father to hold him once more as he did in the beginning? Did the Father long for the Son, for the separation of incarnation to be over, for the suffering of the divine-human self to complete its purpose?

The world is not going to be the same for a very long time. Maybe it will never be the same as it was before, before the virus. Maybe some insights will come from the experience. Have you noticed that apart from the pleasant sounds of birds and the gusts of wind blowing through the leaves, the sky is quiet, clear. The jet planes are stilled. The roads are less busy. The Earth is given a chance to breathe,

to recover. And we humans are being made to slow down, to listen, pay attention to our surroundings, take things in like we haven't in a long time.

This is the time to make space for God. Sometimes we rush around so much, fill our lives with so much stuff that God is always made to wait. There's always something else to do. But not today, not this Good Friday. On this day we wait with God through the agony of the death of the Son, remembering that through this act sin is forgiven and we human beings are given another chance at life. At the cross of the death of the Son of God we meet redemption, we foresee salvation, we get a glimpse of how great is the gift, how feely given. Beyond the virus, beyond the material and mortal, beyond the cross lies a horizon of hope.

The world was not the same again after the crucifixion of Jesus. The sky darkened in protest, the curtain of the sacred temple was torn. Can you hear the echo of Pontius Pilate's question, 'What is truth?' Here is the truth, the Son of God broken on a tree.

On this Good Friday I leave you with Jesus. Reflect and pray today. Give thanks to God for many things; for the medical and technological advances we have in our era to combat the deadly virus even as it takes a heavy toll. Give thanks to God for the skill and endurance of researchers and specialists, of doctors, nurses and everyone who is doing their part in this invisible battle. Give thanks to God for the foresight of leaders who have advised caution and preventative procedures, which even if inconvenient and annoying and will have lasting social consequences, are keeping people safe. Give thanks to God for the economic support for people who have lost jobs. Give thanks to God for the clearing air quality and refreshment of the Earth. Give thanks to God above all else for the gift of Jesus whose life was given on the first Good Friday that we may know truth and have new life.