

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

Today marks the beginning of Holy Week. We have journeyed with Jesus through Lent. We are in the forty days and forty nights. We have moved from his baptism, through the wilderness of testing and temptation, to the gates of Jerusalem where we meet him today. We have all experienced this journey in our own way. Think briefly of the forty days and forty nights for you. Have you drawn closer to Jesus in this time? Have you sensed the journey we symbolically take each year, this way of the cross?

Yesterday some of us moved through the way of the cross, the symbolic liturgical stations, in our day out to Sevenhill. These stations of the cross, so different from the ones most of us have walked before, were simple, etched into the beautiful countryside. The gum trees stood watching over each station, branches broken and bark falling off, a stark reminder to us that the incarnation, life, and passion of Jesus is not confined to ancient Israel but is present with each of us every day of our lives.

Now we stand ready to walk with Jesus in the final week of his life of earth. The events of human salvation set in motion from the beginning of time have come to this pivotal point. Here is Jesus, ready to enter the holy city, not on a horse drawn chariot, not clothed in fine robes, just mounted on a donkey, sitting on his friends' cloaks, with the colt, the foal of the donkey accompanying. The prophecy is coming true. The king is coming, humble and riding on a donkey.

In that time Roman emperors and military generals, triumphant in war, would enter the city in fantastic spectacle. At the gates of Jerusalem there was no triumphal arch awaiting Jesus, no fanfare. But there were many people, and they threw their cloaks on the ground for him to pass over, and they spread

branches on the road ahead of him, and they hailed him with shouts of 'Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is this one who comes in the name of the Lord.' All this is for the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.

From this point Jesus will move through the city, crowded for the festival of the Passover, to the place where he will give the supper we still take today to remember him. He will break bread and share wine and he will wash the disciples' feet. He will give them the command to love. Then he will wrestle in the garden with God in his agony and human emotion, and he will say, 'Your will be done.' He will feel the sting of betrayal and be arrested. Then his passion, his suffering, takes place – the inquisition, the torture, the failure of the people to believe, their desire for his death, the release of the criminal Barabbas, and that long and terrible walk to the darkest of places on this earth. Golgotha. The place of the skull. Gall-filled wine, stripping, mocking. What has he done?

Where is humility to be found today in contemporary Australia where the individual is first and the individual demands the comfort and security of an existence which is made out of our capitalist society at the expense of others in less fortunate contexts? Did you know that the moves which have seen industry and manufacturing exit Australia and other western countries has led to the development of industry in poor countries where people are paid much less than they would here. In the Philippines high rise industrial buildings have nets slung across from one building to the next at the level of each window. These are called 'suicide nets,' horribly named because they catch the hapless person who has become so desperate about their existence that they long to end their life by throwing themselves out the window. All our comforts and conveniences have a cost that someone else is paying.

Jesus' message from the table of the last supper echoes forlornly – love one another. Jesus bent the knee to serve others, to tenderly wash and love them. His love is like a salve on an open and burning wound. With his loving attitude it is impossible to truly hate another being. There is always another way than the hatred that leads to violence. Life is God-given. Yet still the people called for his death, 'Let him be crucified, let him be crucified.'

Without love human beings turn ugly on the inside. They have lost the face of Jesus imprinted there by God. When a person has failed to be loved as a child they do not know how to love others. Love must be taught, as Jesus taught the disciples. Jesus taught them to love by loving them. 'Do you know what I have done to you?' he said at the last supper after he had washed their feet. The disciples don't know until he tells them – 'Love one another.'

God loved the world, which means all of creation, everyone and everything, so much and showed that love by giving Jesus. God knew that Jesus would die. God knew about the hateful shout, 'Crucify!' Without that shout, the events of salvation could not unfold. For God so loved the world that God's own Son, being of God's very self, would die. All to teach about love.

How much must God weep when people hate, even after Jesus taught them the way of life, through love. Violence escalates without love, darkens the world. The imperfection of the fall of humanity from grace is never more so starkly seen than when human beings hate and kill each other.

Jesus entered Jerusalem humble and mounted on a donkey. Still the crowds hailed and adored him, even though the crowds would also condemn him before the governor. There is much for us to learn about humility in Holy Week. Humility and our humanity are closely related through the love that

Jesus taught. When the world learns about love then will we overcome the limitations that cause us to hurt and do violence to others. God intends for us to be so much greater. And so God, who so loved the world loved the Son back to life and back to himself, to where it all began. Love breaks the bonds of death and defeats darkness. But true love must begin in humility. Let your mind be like that of Jesus.

May we be moved, with the centurion, who witnessed the earth quaking in horror at the death of this humble human being, to say, 'Truly this man is God's Son.' May you be blessed with humility during this Holy Week. May you practice love even when it seems it is easier to look the other way. And may you receive the love that pours from the cross into your humble and loving soul.