

An old neighbor of mine once said she doesn't do Church in Holy Week as it is too depressing!!

She was one of those Christians who went from the great Hosanna of Palm Sunday to the Al ah ah.. I can't say it the A word of Easter Day!!

She missed out on so much. In doing so she distorted the whole Christian story. She never experienced the humility needed to come and stand at the foot of the Cross on Good Friday and realize that Christ was not crucified by bad people, no not bad people but people like me, like you, like us. By religious people who meant well but got it wrong! She could not understand the great truth of God's love, that even though we did it all wrong, got it all disastrously confused he still comes back to us time and time again.

He calls us to supper and he washes his disciples feet. He calls us to receive and some like Peter say no Lord you can't wash my feet let me wash yours, but no he continues if you don't allow me to wash your feet then you have no part with me. Peter goes over the top then wash all of me. No Christ says, he makes it plain it is a symbolic washing, a washing away of our sinful natures before we come before Jesus as he breaks the bread and pours the wine. Preparing us for the way ahead, preparing us for what is to come, not only the supper, but the crucifixion of Love. How his heart must have been aching, after so long with these men how they still get things wrong. He must have been weeping within.

Especially over Judas the betrayer, as he is called. Had he travelled with Christ and seen all he did yet still could not really ultimately believe in the goodness of the one. His eyes had been closed to the miracles, the healing, the generosity of the love that Jesus bestowed? His sin crucified Love. But wait; before we judge, because it is our sin too that Christ was crucified for. Our sin continues to crucify Love. People are still blind to love when it is right there beneath their noses.

And we should indeed beat our chests in penitence; as there is no penitence of ours that can find a sufficient humiliation before the radiance of the majesty of the crucified Love of God. Tomorrow when you come before the cross, because let's be clear here ... that's where you should be. When you stand before the cross, remember this is God we hung there, if he had been merely a good person, or a brave soldier or an innocent man it would have been bad enough, but as our faith tells us it is God we hung on that cross, the greatest tragedy of all time resonates throughout the universe.

If not the feet washing, although you should, but God understands our reticence, then in the Beauchamp Chapel so lovingly created for you is the Garden of Gethsemane, you might accept Jesus invitation to come spend one hour with me, one hour, that's all, because what will cross your mind as you slip home and settle down for a cup of tea or bedtime drink and watch a bit of tele? When Jesus asks not even one spare one hour with me at his final moments of freedom? What will your answer be? I had to leave to get home ... for what? An hour of Galapagos, well yes I can imagine that is quite a pull, the Last Kingdom maybe? Or in time for the news? News of a world still aching in pain, children mutilated

or dead, men kneeling to be beheaded, refugees stumbling away in fear of what is to come, protestors angrily shouting at anyone who they see as different to themselves, one lone voice saying please help us!

I'm sorry; am I making you feel uncomfortable? Maybe that is how the Gospel should make us feel? But don't feel bad, you are experiencing what it means to be living the Gospel.

But then if we stay for one hour, then what We go home in the silence of the darkness of the night, we leave the darkness of the Church and Gethsemane behind. Feeling that the service has not really ended for us, that there is more to come and that is not wrong, we go home as Jesus is taken away to be questioned by Caiaphas and then dragged before Herod and Pilate the following morning

We will awake on Good Friday and the world will still be aching in pain at the unbearable suffering that goes on, the world still hasn't heard the word that God has been speaking to us since the dawn of time, for today is no different to the suffering that goes on except that this Friday one suffers by the hands of us all

Tonight my words may have disturbed you, you may still be wondering what the word is, I hope my words have not distressed you too much or maybe like my neighbour, you just put it down to that time of year when nothing inspiring or uplifting is said, but your indifference or your anger does not heal the aching heart of Jesus, it does not heal the world's suffering, no; only Love can do that, we must learn to be indignant at the world's atrocities without spewing rage and anger, we must learn to hear the truth without prejudice or spin. Are we part of this world that continues to pierce the heart of Love or are we on God's side, working out our place in His eternal love story? In the history of the world we once had a chance of Love and we hung him on a cross to die! But nothing can really beat Love. Even on Good Friday Love still won the day because not even death on a cross can defeat us if we are really identified with that true life force, the perfect sacrificial Love of God who calls us home to rest in His wounded and sacred heart.