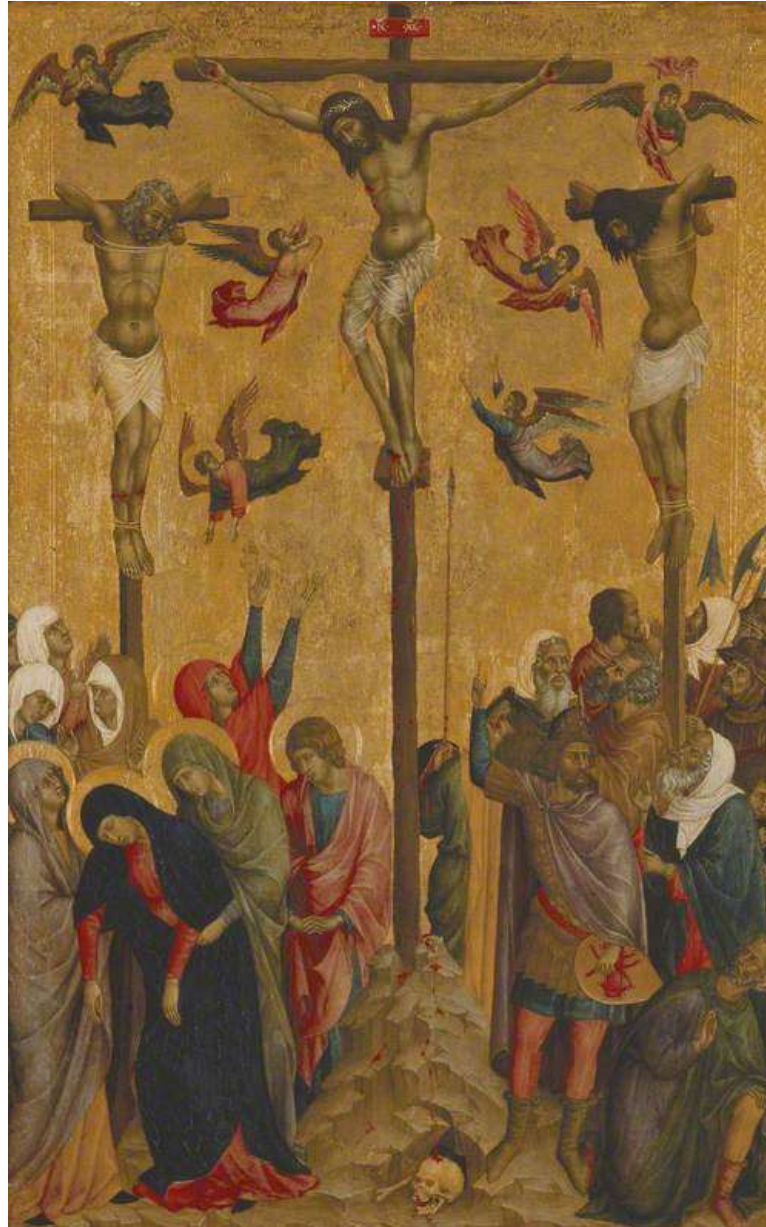


Good Friday

10th April 2020



The Altar is stripped bare and the sanctuary of the church is empty at St. Mary's today. There are no flowers, no palms or candles. Today, this day of bitterness and mourning, our attention is focused on the Cross. The Cross where Jesus hangs in suffering for us. The Cross where Christ hangs alone as his disciples from last night have betrayed him, denied him and now abandoned him. The Cross where Our Saviour hangs in love for us, taking upon himself all our sins so that we may have hope. That sure and certain hope of salvation. That real hope of God's mercy and forgiveness if we truly walk in the ways of Jesus Christ.

Many of us at this moment in time are experiencing our own cross, our own Good Friday. The anxiety and worry over friends and family during the Covid-19 pandemic. The financial pressures and sleepless nights about the future, the job, the business. The frustrations of not being able to see parents, children and grandchildren. The sadness and grief over the death of loved ones. How many people on this Good Friday have already uttered those words of Jesus on the Cross:

'My God, My God why have you deserted me?' (Mk 15:34b)

I know a woman whose Good Friday started in January when she was told by the consultant at hospital that she would never walk again, she would never return to live in her own home again, she would no longer have the physical freedom to come and go as she used to.

I knew a man from a previous parish many years ago who had been living his own Good Friday for over fifteen years – he was an alcoholic. He would often sleep in a public car park and sometimes behind a supermarket. He had not seen his wife and three children and grandchildren for over a decade. This man had to beg to get enough money each day for his next drink.

I've spoken to an individual whose own Good Friday is not just pain and suffering for himself but for his whole family as he is addicted to the internet and the problems that it brings from online gambling to unsuitable viewing material. He has been sacked from work and his wife has left him.



'My God, My God why have you deserted me?' Jesus spoke these words to remind us that when we are in the most darkest moment of life, either through choice or circumstance, when we are drowning in pain and suffering and have absolutely nothing then we will find God. Abandoned, stripped naked, humiliated Jesus had nothing except God and this is why he calls out his name. ***'Eloi, Eloi lamma Sabachthani!'*** From the Cross Jesus is showing us the way to the Father by

completely surrendering to Him as there is no object, no person who can save us apart from God. When all seems lost it is only God who remains and who is steadfast. From the Cross Jesus is showing us that he understands our pain our suffering because he has been there too. From the Cross Jesus is showing us what forgiveness really is – mercy for both saint and sinner, a chance of hope and eternal life, for those who would take him into their lives.

My brothers and sisters I invite you to place the crucifix in your home today in a prominent position for all the household to see. I ask you to gaze on that corpus of Jesus and see the face of God's love and mercy and when you do then pray. Pray for all the world, pray for the needy and the hungry, pray for the penitent and the wanderer, pray for the believer and doubter, pray for those in healthcare and the emergency services, pray for those in government and authority, pray for those suffering and dying of the Covid-19 virus, pray for families who are separated and for those who are financially struggling, pray for the Church and our Holy Father Pope Francis. Whatever you do, whether in words or silence, pray.

Then I invite you to kiss the five wounds of Our Lord on the Cross and surrender yourself with all your faults, failings, worries and cares into his hands. For as he shows us on the Cross when we think we have nothing we always have him. When all security, routine and family have been taken away from us there is one person who is ever present – Our Lord Jesus Christ.

God Bless and keep praying

Fr. O'Brien