

HOMILY FOR GOOD FRIDAY

We come to life, we live and we die, just as Jesus did.

We celebrate birth and life. We almost accept it as our right. Once we have a body through conception, we have a place in the world. It seems wrong that we should lose that. However, death seems to be the thief which takes away our rights.

The Passion and death of Jesus Christ certainly seemed offensive to human life on so many levels. He was treated as a thing to be rid of. He was made to be appalling to look at – disfigured. He had no beauty, no majesty, despised and rejected – a man of suffering – waste.

We might be offended by this. But, let us consider. If Jesus was prepared to die, then Jesus acknowledged this as a part of our human journey. As much as we have a right to be born and to live, we have a responsibility to honour God by our life. Also, with death, we have a right that our death should honour our life but, our responsibility is to honour God in death. This is how Jesus lived and died. This was his experience of being fully human.

The creative power of the human mind steps in and offers opportunities but, also indignities. Before birth, children are aborted. In life, so many atrocities seek to destroy the dignity and rights of people.

We focus on what we might lose before we even give a thought to what others have lost. People get angry within COVID-19 restrictions when they are made to miss out. If only we could work as hard for the protection of other people's rights as much as we work for ours. In a way, death takes a number of forms when our attitudes towards others are nothing short of deadly.

We can be impacted by an attitude to death which disrespects the reality of being human. Assisted dying and euthanasia evolve. A dying and suffering person is treated as a nuisance and a cost to society, much like Jesus Christ in his day.

In our society, there is a growing trend to simply dispose of a person after death. Funeral homes are asked to pick up a body, cremate it and send the ashes to some family member later. Here, there is no respect for the reality of dying. There is no honouring the person's life. Not even Jesus was treated like that.

If Jesus died a death which was intended by God, then death has a worthiness for us. Death is somehow an intrinsic part of the human journey which we cannot treat as less than the fullness of our human life. Good palliative care practices have even made it easier for us to undergo the journey of death.

Death has a place in life. Jesus has shown us this and, what he has shown us is that it becomes the place where we approach the throne of grace. When we die to ourselves, God steps in. As the Hebrews' writer reminds us, when we submit humbly in prayer, God hears us. Death is no less than an act of humility.

Jesus loves us in life. Jesus loves us in our death and suffering because, Jesus has experienced it all. As such, we are certainly the winners, because Jesus shows how, by God's power, death gives way to life.