

Short Address on Tuesday in Holy Week

John 12 v20-36 Jesus predicts His death

One of the most quoted verses in the bible is John 3 v16 “God so loved the world” which may say much for those who know Jesus but for those seeking him John 1 v45 is a challenge. In John 1 Philip meets Nathaniel who says, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth” to which he responds, “Come and See!”

Here we have some Greeks coming to Philip and asking to see Jesus, “Sir we want to see Jesus”. How would we react if after delivering cards and Easter eggs to every house in the parish, or coming out of school, somebody stopped us and said that? It seems a simple request, but Jesus’ response makes it clear it is anything but that.

“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.”

It seems a simple enough request, but Jesus’ response is anything but simple. I don’t know what answer those who approached Philip expected but I am sure it is not the response people in the parish would expect. I’m sure they would not expect to hear about death. It is probably not the answer we expect or want when we ask to see Jesus, but it is the answer Jesus gives.

Somehow death and seeing Jesus are intimately related. To see Jesus is more than looking at him. It is more than just believing the things he said and did. **We follow Christ as participants not spectators.** If we want to see Jesus, then we must learn to die. To the degree we avoid and deny death, we refuse to see Jesus.

This work of dying is difficult and painful. We are not being asked, like Jesus, to offer ourselves up to physical death but it is, as Jesus describes, soul troubling. It shakes us to the very core. It’s about allowing to die the things which separate us from the love of God. Its life changing. Dying begins to clarify and heal our vision. We see a new life, and a new way of being. It is looking at Jesus and being prepared to follow his way of living and being. That’s what this week is about.

Holy Week is a school for learning how to die and death is the window through which we see Jesus. We must be careful, however, that we do not get stuck looking at the window rather than through the window. We meet people who cannot see beyond the pain and death.

Dying is not the end, but a means, and a way, of transforming who we are. It is being able to see through that window what is to come for those who can journey with Christ to the Cross - and beyond.