



Homily for the Easter Vigil

Holy Saturday - 20th April 2019

Cardiff Cathedral: St. David's Cathedral, Cardiff

Archbishop George Stack

One of my favourite books for Holy Week is “The Things He Carried” by Bishop Stephen Cottrell. The cross itself. The crown of thorns. The seamless robe that was torn from him. The book goes on to explore the other things we lay upon him. The human trauma of pain and death. The hopes and fears that lay in his heart. The rejection of the sacrificial love for humanity for which he gave his life. The prophet Isaiah put it well in the reading on Good Friday. “Ours were the sufferings he bore. Ours were the sins he carried”.

You will remember when we blessed the Easter Candle this evening, I pierced it five times with what we call grains of incense. These are symbols of the wounds that Jesus bears for us. During that ceremony I prayed “By his holy and glorious wounds, may Christ our Lord guard us and keep us safe. Amen”.

One of the best descriptions of the life and ministry of the priest is that he is a wounded healer. Like the rest of humanity, he carries the wounds of his past, memories, disappointments, success and failure, agony and ecstasy. As one famous actress said on being told she was old and wrinkled “I worked hard for every one of these wrinkles”. It is recognising our woundedness that we become more sensitive to the vulnerability of others. “Bear one another’s burdens” as St. Paul said in his letter in the New Testament (Gal.6:2)

Denis Potter was a brilliant and controversial playwright who died of cancer in 1994. Shortly before his death he was interviewed by Melvyn Bragg on Television. “Isn’t your faith just a bandage around the wound” he asked. “No” replied Potter. “It is the wound”. It is our belief that God in Christ has entered into the deepest wound of humanity. Even when we see statues of him risen and glorious, he still carries the wounds of his Passion and Death.

The prophet Isaiah again:

He was pierced for our transgressions;

He was crushed for our iniquities.

Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,

And by his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5-6)
