

Fr Kevin's homily for Good Friday, 3 April 2026

Only a crucified God can truly speak to us in our suffering and pain. Ultimately, only a crucified God can save us.

Let's begin this reflection by recognising a sad truth: the sad truth of just how much suffering and pain there is in this world. Think of the invasion of Ukraine. Think of the war in Gaza. Think of the war against Iran. And recognise – recognise the suffering of innocent people in each of these wars. Not everyone is innocent of course, but even so, so many innocent people have had their livelihoods and even their homes destroyed. Innocent people have lived in fear. Innocent people have been injured and maimed and even killed. Innocent people have mourned the deaths of those they love. And if you have the courage to do so, think also of the suffering of the Aboriginal people in this land. Europeans came to this land in 1788. And over the next 150 years, groups of Aboriginal people across Australia lost their traditional way of life, and their land, and even their lives. They were confined on missions which took away their freedom. Their children were taken away. If we have the courage to be honest, we have to recognise that Aboriginal people have suffered in this land for more than two hundred years. And lastly, think of the suffering that ordinary people like us experience in our lives. This woman and her husband had a stillborn child. This man is living with cancer. That woman is in a violent relationship. That man – young or old – is thinking about ending his life. And of course, each one of us could add to this list with the worst and hardest things which we ourselves have experienced. And that's the sad truth. The sad truth is that there's a lot of pain and a lot of suffering in this world.

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Why do bad things happen to good people? Why does so much pain and suffering happen in this world to people who really don't deserve it? Some philosophers and some theologians have tried to explain this. They've tried to give us an answer made of words. Some suffering, they tell us, is caused by human sin. One person hurts another person, or one group of people hurts another group of people. What's more, they tell us that God has created a world which is ruled by physical laws. And there may be times when God intervenes and breaks these laws, but they tell us that these times are rare. Well, there may indeed be something in all these reflections, but this I know: When a woman in her grief and despair asks me why God allowed her baby to die, these explanations count for very little. Or when an asylum seeker here in Australia tells me that in his own country the government killed his wife and his children, these explanations count for even less. There's a limitation to these explanations made of words. Explanations made of words don't really speak to us in our grief and despair, in our suffering and pain.

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Jesus doesn't give us an answer made of words. Jesus gives us an answer made of life. For Jesus is the Son of God, and there he was: way up in heaven, out of danger in heaven, safe in heaven. But Jesus looked down and saw the suffering of his people. Jesus saw each one of us in all our own worst moments. And Jesus knew that he had to be with us. And so, the Son of God became human. The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. And Jesus suffered as we do. His message that we should all love one another, threatened the powerful, who had plans of their own. And so – as we've just heard – Jesus was taken and tortured and killed. As our First Reading told us, Jesus is a man of suffering and familiar with pain.

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For now, when we come to Jesus – when we come to Jesus in our pain, our suffering, our grief and despair – we sense that he is able to understand. Jesus does not give us an explanation made of words. As one who has himself suffered, Jesus is simply present to us. He sits with us. He lets us pour out our hearts to him. And as a man of suffering, Jesus understands – he understands our pain. In some ways, that changes nothing, for our pain is still there. But in other ways, it changes everything, for with Jesus beside us, we're able to find a path to healing. With Jesus beside us, we allow our pain to change us, to transform us. And we find that as we embrace our pain, we become better and more compassionate people. And indeed, as Jesus helps us to embrace our pain, we find too that we also become more like Jesus, who was himself transformed by pain. Jesus shows us the way. Indeed, Jesus *is* the Way: he's the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

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