



Palm Sunday 2019

Homily

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**Sunday 14 April 2019
St Mary's Cathedral, Perth**

As those of you who follow what Pope Francis is doing would know, he is the master of the simple phrase which contains much more than first meets the eye. This was the case a few years ago when, in a homily at his morning Mass in the Vatican, he invited those at the Mass to make room in their lives for God's love so that he could change them.

Today as we celebrate Palm Sunday and enter into the holiest week of the year I would like to borrow the Pope's words and issue the same invitation to all of you here in the Cathedral, including of course, myself: *"Make room in your lives for God's love so he can change you"*.

As the coming week unfolds we will hear, in the Church's liturgy, about people who did in fact change because they opened themselves to God's love, which of course they encountered in Jesus. We will hear for example about Martha whose love for the Lord so overwhelmed her that she anointed his feet with precious oil and dried his feet with her hair. We will hear about the disciples who, in spite of their growing fear, did their best to stay close to Jesus, even if their courage failed most of them at the last minute. We will hear about John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, who did stay faithful and stood with Mary at the foot of the cross. We will hear about Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, both Jewish leaders, who found the courage to defend him and to bury his broken body after his death. All these people, and many others, not least among them Mary, the Lord's mother, had made room in their lives for God's love and that love changed them - it transformed them into people of extraordinary courage, compassion and fidelity.

We will also hear of people who did not make room in their lives for God's love. We will hear of some of the Jewish leaders whom Jesus himself identified as people whose hearts were hard and cold. They could not tolerate the warm humanity and compassion of Jesus. Tragically this led them to regard Jesus as a threat to their way of thinking and acting. We will hear about Judas who in spite of his closeness to Jesus remained closed to Jesus' love. We will hear about Peter, who denied that he even knew Jesus but who, in the end, was forgiven because his betrayal was the result of fear rather than because he had blocked the Lord from his life. And we will hear of those who, in the face of the resurrection of Jesus, still tried to destroy him by making up the story that his disciples had stolen his dead body.

What can these two different reactions to Jesus say to us today?

Firstly, I think, that the change which God's love brings about in our lives is one that actually brings us alive, makes us more genuinely human, and enables us to be the people God created us to



be. If our faith, and the practice of our religion, is not bringing us deep joy and a new freedom to live our lives with enthusiasm and gratitude, we may need to ask ourselves if we have really yet understood the gift of faith the Lord has given us.

Secondly, I think, the failure to make room in our lives for God's love can have terrible and destructive effects not only for us but for others as well, including and especially those closest to us. The failure of Judas, and of some of the Jewish leaders, led to the torture and execution of Jesus. Our own failures to embrace God's love may not have such drastic effects, but we may still be a cause of suffering, of distress and even of despair, in the lives of others. We see this all around us. Do we have the courage to also see it in ourselves?

In Holy Week, we are offered extraordinary opportunities to make room in our lives for God's love. Through the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation, and through the beautiful and inspiring liturgies of the Chrism Mass on Tuesday night, the commemoration of the Last Supper on Holy Thursday evening, the Stations of the Cross and the afternoon service on Good Friday, the Easter Vigil on Saturday night and the Mass on Easter Sunday we will, if we let ourselves, be plunged into the story of God's extraordinary love for us. It will be like diving into a pool and finding ourselves completely enveloped in the water of life. All we have to do is let it happen. All we have to do is make room for it in our lives this week. Jesus is standing at the door of our hearts, knocking. If we open the door and invite him in he will come and sit down with us, share his life with us, and welcome us as his disciples and friends.

So let us accept the invitation of Pope Francis: *make room in your lives (this week) for God's love and he will change you.*