

Homily **Good Friday - Year C** (19.4.19)

If I'm looking rather bitter, it's because my lunch was sauerkraut and gherkins. [laughter] It's part of a treat on my diet.

You know, I'm always moved by this service, and in particular the Veneration of the Cross. Because it hit me again this year, how much loss I've experienced in life and how devastating loss of any kind can be - Loss of something precious to one, loss of a loved one, loss of health, loss of mobility.

And it's been a while since I experienced this particular loss, which came back to mind, and it's a loss I think that most priests experience. I felt it when I came to this parish in 2010. A lot of people in their lives lose a job or sometimes they even lose a family through marriage breakdown or whatever. And sometimes in tragic circumstances often they lose their home. You know, when a priest moves, and I'll be moving in September, and it's hit me again, you lose your family, your home and your job in one go. And not everybody loses all three things in one go. It's a very strange experience and everything feels alien when you go to the new place. I can remember the first week I was here walking up that street and the whole of Grangefield School was coming past me and I thought,

'My God, I've had it.' [laughter]

'They look like thugs and nobody will notice.'

And at that point in your life you can't see initially anything but the loss. You can't see immediately any new life or meaning or purpose in the change.

And one of the things that always moves me, and I always do it when I'm sat down during the Veneration of the Cross, is over a period of time in a parish, and I've been nine years here now, you know so many of the individuals who come to kiss the cross. It always moves me, because so many individuals in this church have lost something precious to them or they have suffered through ill health and so on. And all those losses come to my mind when I see the person kissing the cross, and when I kiss the cross, my losses too.

But you know, it's countercultural this, it goes against the grain of all that we're taught about life in a secular society. Because you're asked to kiss the cross, your crosses, and accept them as Christ did. You're asked to embrace the loss, your losses. You're asked to accept death, your death.

On this solemn day, we're actually asked to do the opposite of what the world tells us to do. We're asked to accept our mortality, our passing nature and the mutability of all things, even our children and loved ones. And we're asked to kiss it and say goodbye to it and to let it go. And we're asked to do that in faith.

In faith we are invited to see that beyond Good Friday, there is the promise of Easter Sunday. There **will be resurrection**, and that there **will be new life** beyond the mutability of this life. There will be Huddersfield beyond Pudsey. [laughter] And I can honestly say that Pudsey has been one of the delightful blessings in my life and though I may have to die to Pudsey, I will take with me all the other pains and losses that I've shared with people here as I look upon the cross of Jesus.