



The Parish of Saint Anthony Glen Huntly

74 Grange Road, Glen Huntly VIC 3163

☎ Telephone: (03) 9569 2099

✉ glenhuntlycaulfield@cam.org.au

www.cam.org.au/glenhuntlycaulfield

ABN: 70548 570 366

Homily at Mass Good Friday – 19 April 2019

In the short period of 60 minutes last Monday priests and people worked together to form a human chain, carrying out many treasures, works of art and valuable things while fire took hold of the vast roof of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. A priest who is the chaplain to the Paris Fire Brigade first went to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel to bring the Eucharist to a safe place; he then went to the Cathedral Treasury to rescue the precious relic of the Crown of Thorns, first brought to France by King St Louis IX in 1239. Some parishioners may have seen this relic in Notre Dame; others may also have seen the collection of relics of the Passion of Jesus in the Church of the Holy Cross in Rome.

A thorn from the Crown of Thorns is displayed in the Cathedral at Aachen in Germany. I visited there with a friend some years ago. While I had a good look around the Cathedral and its Treasury, my friend stood fixed at the relic of the Thorn. When I caught up with him again, I asked what he found so interesting about the Thorn. He explained to me that for many years he had suffered terrible migraine headaches. As he looked at the thorn he said that he thought of all that Our Lord had suffered with the thorns that pierced his skull, perhaps his ears, certainly one eye according to the Shroud of Turin. Perhaps the words of St Peter in his First Letter came to his mind: “Christ suffered for you ...”

Christ suffered for you ... Christ suffered for all mankind in every time and place. Good Friday is still a day when the world stops still. Our political leaders have called a truce in the election campaign today. The football will kick off in the hour or so, but not before Christians here in Melbourne at least have come to the Church perhaps this morning, certainly many thousands right now, to recall all that Jesus did for us and for all people, in every age, both living and dead. The Word of God helps us to think, reflect, contemplate, remember “Christ suffered for you”: His agony and prayer in the garden; his arrest and trial, his scourging and the crown of thorns; the journey to Calvary under the weight of the Cross; his Crucifixion; enduring insults, heckling and spitting, shame and unendurable pain; feelings of loneliness and abandonment; death. “Christ suffered for you.”

In a few moments you and I have the opportunity to venerate the Cross of Christ – we approach the Cross in our own time, in our own way. Perhaps all the experiences of life over the past year will come to mind – like my friend with his migraines. Personal health battles. Family worries. Disappointments with work or study or relationships. Experiences of betrayal or false accusations. Misunderstandings. Perhaps challenges to faith, when we feel our prayers go unanswered, or feelings of depression or loneliness or fear.

We bring all of these things to the Crucified Christ today. His pierced wounds and feet. His body torn by the scourge. His face covered in tears and sweat. His head crowned with thorns. We kiss his feet. We look to his face, perhaps through our own tears. “Christ suffered for you ...”

But now we take our stand beneath Christ's Cross with Mary, Christ's mother and ours. We pray together for the Church, Christ's Bride, for all who believe in God and search for truth, for those we know and who share our faith, and for those separated from the community of the Church, especially prisoners, the sick, and people in our world living in war zones, and afflicted by poverty and hunger. And while you and I go about our daily lives in freedom, and no one challenged us as we made our way to the Church today, we are becoming more and more aware that our Christian way of life, our Christian morality and values, are under pressure even here in Australia.

Rugby champion Israel Follau knows that. And I'd say that in his prison cell somewhere in Melbourne Cardinal George Pell is joining his prayers with those of all of us today.