

# Self-Giving Love

As Holy week approaches, we enter with increasing intensity into the death and rising of Jesus. The cross once again stands before us reminding us that God's love stands firm and that love redeems.

In this final week of Lent Jesus talks about his imminent death and resurrection. He uses the example of the grain of wheat dying and rising to new life. We hear Jesus saying to his apostles; *'Now the hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. I tell you most solemnly, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain, but it dies it yields a rich harvest.'* Jesus is saying that he must die to bring new life.

Pain and suffering are never easy, neither did Jesus find it easy. When the actual moment of suffering and death arrived, Jesus was filled with fear. In the garden of Gethsemane, he is deeply troubled, and we hear him saying, *'Father my soul is troubled.'* At this moment Jesus is at his most human. Loneliness and intense fear takes hold of him and he finds it difficult to do his Father's will. *'Father, if you are willing, take this cup of suffering away from me.'* He is also finding it difficult to trust and believe that his loving God is with him.

The pain and suffering of Jesus is reproduced every day in our lives. Sickness, loneliness, emptiness, darkness, bring us to the foot of the cross. However, we are not alone at the cross, we stand with Mary, the mother of Jesus. If we dare to love, we must be prepared to grieve. As we grow older and experience our parents and siblings dying and our friends slipping away, we become aware of how powerless we are in the face of partings, suffering and death. There seems nothing for it but to endure. Our willingness to endure does not involve gritting our teeth, or macho strength of controlling our emotions, it is a vulnerable strength, to embrace the dark with the light and the ability to slowly keep rising after a fall. We are called to surrender and accept the crosses that come our way.

Surrender is a difficult thing to do, it does not come easy for any of us. We see the finality of total surrender when Jesus outstretched his arms on the cross. His total surrender, of letting - go and handing over his life. *'Father into hands I commend my spirit.'* As darkness covers the hill of calvary, the cry of death echoes the cry of birth. Already within the pain of dying the light of resurrection begins to penetrate the darkness.

Jesus' life was not taken from him, he gave it out of love of God and us.

The dawn breaks, the stone is rolled back, the tomb is empty,  
**JESUS IS RISEN**

Jesus continues to rise in each one of us when our hearts carry a relentless belief in the light, when we keep hoping against hope, when we have the extraordinary ability to begin again when our lives are touched with tragedy.

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is now within each of us.

**Give us Risen Lord your peace, set us free.**