



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

Good Friday ~ 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

“I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn 13:34-35.)

Jesus spoke these piercing words to his apostles at the Last Supper, just before his passion and death. This year, my Good Friday message must necessarily touch upon the suffering of those Christians and indeed all people living in the land where Christ himself lived and died. As Christians, our gaze always turns to the East, to the Holy Land whence our Redeemer came, where today its inhabitants endure seemingly interminable violence during this time of persecution, genocide, even martyrdom.

Indeed, it seems that in so many places in our world evil has won out, just as it must have seemed to Jesus’ disciples on that Good Friday nearly two millennia ago, when he suffered death on a cross. But as Catholic Christians, we live not only by the cross of Good Friday, but by believing in the promise of the Resurrection. And just as that first Easter Sunday proved to the disciples that evil does not triumph over good, so too must we believe that the human heart, no matter how troubled, ultimately seeks light, life, and hope.

The suffering of those in the Middle East represents perhaps the most extreme example of the evil that surrounds us, and every person living there deserves our prayers and our practical assistance. But it is not the only case in point. Closer to home, one only has to observe the overall coarseness of the public discourse surrounding our own Presidential race to see the same kind, if not degree, of dehumanizing rhetoric: anyone with whom we disagree instantly becomes the “other”. Ire is not helpful when dealing with questions of borders, wealth and inequality, the racial divide and a host of other contentious topics. And the depth and strength of people’s conviction that their opponents are determined to destroy their way of life has never been stronger in our country, except perhaps in the lead-up to the Civil War.

When Christ gave us his followers his “new commandment” at the Last Supper, he was telling us to show charity to all people. It is a moral obligation, a divine command. And so in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, I ask you to join with me in praying that all may approach with mercy and forgiveness the “other”—the stranger in our midst, those with whom we disagree politically, the poor.

And I also ask you on this Good Friday to contemplate with me this question: as a Christian, venerating the Cross of he who suffered and died for our sins, what sufferings am I willing to undergo, what is the cross I am willing to bear, to demonstrate the love for others that we are called to by our Lord and Savior himself?

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci
Bishop of Manchester