

TFTD L30 Is it nothing to you?

John 13.1 Just before the Passover feast, Jesus knew that his time had



come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now loved them to the very end.

**About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position: how it takes place
While somebody else is eating or opening
A window or just walking dully along ...**

On the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem is a doorway with a Latin inscription written over it: O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus. If you look carefully, you can see it in the photo. The words come from the book of Lamentations in the Bible, a lament for a ruined city which begins: Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Look and see, if there is any sorrow like my sorrow ...

It always hits a nerve, somehow. The Via Dolorosa, where Christians walk

to trace the footsteps of Jesus on the road to the Cross, is a narrow, bustling street in the Old City, winding through the covered market. Families live there, going about their own business, trying to make a living from the crowds of pilgrims and tourists. It isn't a sacred precinct, cut off from the world: it's a slice of real life. So when we walk down London Road for our Good Friday walk of witness, we shouldn't be surprised if most people are just getting on with their lives around us. That's how it was when Jesus carried his cross through the city on the first Good Friday — just an ordinary working day.

But within and underneath that ordinary life, something extraordinary is happening — something God is doing, something that will change the world for ever. You won't see it unless you stop to open your eyes, step aside to pay attention, to look and see. You can see it in Jesus' words at the Last Supper. Bread and wine on the table — the staff of life, stuff that grows in the soil, things people make. It's just bread and wine. But when Jesus takes the bread, and asks God's blessing on it, and breaks it — it becomes both more truly itself and something else, a vehicle of God's grace in the world, a sign of the Kingdom. It's for you, Jesus says — my body, given for you, broken for you.

And you can see it in John's story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet. A servant, wrapped in a towel, kneeling on the ground to wash the guests' dusty feet. Except when you look more carefully, the servant is Jesus, the



Master and Lord. Everything is upside-down — that isn't how it should be. Jesus, teaching his disciples about love to the uttermost. If you remember nothing else, remember this: this is my mandate, my new commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. That's how people will know you're my disciples — by the way you love one another. It's very simple — and incredibly difficult. You won't get it right all the time — in fact, sometimes you'll get it horribly wrong. You don't have to look very far in the world to see what happens when people don't love one another.

Good Friday is a day for attentiveness — just being there, stopping to notice what is going on before our eyes, a day for bearing witness to what nobody else notices. Crucifixion wasn't news, in Jesus' day: it was a way of getting rid of trouble-makers, sweeping them away with the dregs of humanity, making sure that nobody recorded or remembered their deaths. Except that this one was remembered. Jesus' followers and friends made it their business to remember, to bear witness, to tell the story of the faceless and nameless victims of violence. The Cross is at the centre of our devotions today, a focal point, a point of testimony. It invites us to bear witness to the compassion of Jesus, to Jesus as the God of the margins, the God who suffers with the victims of violence in our broken world.

But there is more to Good Friday than that — there has to be. Otherwise the pain would be simply unbearable. I was telling the story to a group of 11-year olds, and they were appalled. Why is it called Good Friday? asked one. And that, I think, is the real question. Why do we call this Friday



“Good”? Where in this story is the good news? Because the Cross also invites us to look beyond the tragedy, to bear witness to the transformational significance of this one death, this one among so many — this one that changed the world for ever.

**WE adore you, O Christ, and we bless you
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

**God bless,
Loveday**