

CRACKED WIDE OPEN

Diocesan Lent Course 2021

Reflection Four

Some words from today's gospel.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert

I am utterly terrified of snakes. Some people hate spiders. Some people hate moths or bats. I am absolutely petrified by snakes.

And therefore, I completely understand the way in which this language about the serpent seeps into the scriptures, as in the passage of the people of Israel.

Through the desert it's the serpents that destroy them at one point, and it's the serpent who becomes the symbol of destruction and deceit through temptation for Adam and Eve.

But I want to move that image on a little bit and to speak about exposure, exposure not simply to fear, but exposure also to glory.

When I was a curate, I remember saying to my trainee incumbent how much I loved being a deacon.

In my first year I loved the business of the servant ministry. It felt very purposeful and worthwhile. I love the business of being with people in practical ways. I love the business of working with young people. I love the business of proclaiming the gospel. All of those things seem to me to be very good functional things.

But, he very simply stopped me in my tracks and said, but that is not what you're called for. Priesthood is about something different. Priesthood is about exposure. It's about standing in the place of glory, the glory where the interchange between God and humanity takes place representing the people of God.

One person taken from the baptized who stands to bear the prayers of the whole people before God, and to represent to them the mercy and the love of God, and that business of standing in that place of glory is precisely what each and every one of you is called to do and to be a person who carries the cross by virtue of your baptism and in doing so is called to be the person in whom the glory of God is revealed.

What does that mean in practical terms? It means that the way you behave, the way you speak, the atmosphere and environment that you create by your behavior, the priorities with which you order your life, these are the things which reveal the glory of Jesus Christ and the means by which his cross is made evident in your life.

The cross which is the sign of hope, the sign of joy, the sign of healing for us. As we reflect on our movement towards the mystery of the cross, may you be strengthened and grow in confidence that the glory of the cross will fit you to stand in the place of the cross in your daily life.