

CRACKED WIDE OPEN

Diocesan Lent Course 2021

Reflection Five

Some words from today's Gospel

Greeks come to Philip and ask him, Sir, we wish to see Jesus.

I think the Greeks stand in this Gospel story from John's Gospel. They stand very much as the people of our own age. They are people who've got an opinion about everything. They're people who like regulation, and law and order. They're the people who really want to know what the meaning of everything is, and who probably think that they found most of the answers. They want to see Jesus.

But we get the impression here, that they want to see Jesus on their own terms. And that strikes me as being something else that's very characteristic of our own age. We might have found an interest in religion, Christian faith, but we often want it on our own terms. What will it deliver for us? How will it make our life better? How will it fit in with our world view? The answer is that seeing Jesus is not something which simply happens on-demand, because we feel we're ready for this moment. Seeing Jesus is a mystery. Seeing Jesus is part of being on the way.

The first Christians were often described as people who were on the way. It's the description for this enterprise of faith, and it isn't a book, it isn't a set of rules. It is a lived experience. It is a process of enquiry. It's a journey, and very often for Christians, I think, we probably have to admit that we don't see Jesus as clearly as we would like. There are times when the vision is opaque. There are times when God seems absent. There are times when prayer and worship feel strangely dull and dry. But the heart and the mind, and the exercise of our commitment, to this life, this process of inquiry, this journey, drive us on, keep us going, prompt us to take another step.

At the end of one of her great detective novels, PD James, writes about a little old lady who'd looked after the church where the drama of death had unfolded, and after it had all happened, and the police had gone away, the crime had been solved, there's a wonderful description of this little old lady who goes back into church and somehow church seems to have been ruined for her, and she doesn't sense the presence of Jesus there anymore, and it's not the same safe space. And then she remembers some words which a priest had once said to her. When you feel you can't pray, when you feel God is not there, when you have nothing spiritual in your heart, kneel down, and say the words, like you always did, and take the next step in this venture of faith. So, we would see Jesus.

This is a mystery. This is a journey. I hope and pray that this Easter, you will make the journey to the cross, and out of the darkness and mystery of the tomb, Jesus will reveal himself to you as you continue your pilgrimage through life, to the day when you see him face to face in heaven.