

Some Reflections for Good Friday

Holding on to the cross

There is a type of cross that is called a 'holding cross', which is shaped out of wood, not for how it will look, but so that it will be comfortable to hold in the hand.

Some years ago I was asked by an elderly couple I knew to take the funeral of their daughter, who had died in very tragic circumstances. The father had recently been ill in hospital himself, and as I talked with them about the funeral service, he told me that his daughter's death had shaken his faith more than anything else ever had.

While he was in hospital, the chaplain had given him a holding cross, which he kept in his pocket, and held in his hand as we talked. He said that when he could find no words to pray, it helped him to just hold on to that cross. At the funeral a few days later, I noticed that he held the cross in his hand throughout the service.

This reminded me of some words from the hymn 'Rock of ages':

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling

In the most difficult times, we may find that we have no words to pray. When we want to offer words of comfort and encouragement to others in those times, we may feel that we don't know what to say. But we can point to the cross, which is the sign that God in Jesus Christ has been there before us – so God knows what pain and suffering is, and is with us as we suffer, and can bring us comfort and hope.

So, at the times when it may feel as if there is nothing else to hold on to, we can hold to that truth in our hearts, just like holding on to a simple wooden cross in our hand.

Revd John Waller

Father God, whatever life may bring,
I know that nothing can separate me from your love:
so may the power of the cross,
and the hope of the risen Lord,
be with me and all those I love. Amen