

Good Friday 2023, Ballarat Cathedral

As we gather here in our Ballarat cathedral this afternoon, we gather around the cross. The wood of the cross standing in our midst is a reminder of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. The red drapes hanging from the cross may remind us of the blood that was shed in those hours of Jesus' suffering. The liturgy of Good Friday is a reminder that Jesus came to share our lives to the full. He shared the sorrows as well as the joys. He knows the pain of human life, as he himself suffered the agony of crucifixion.

On Good Friday, we reflect particularly on Jesus' suffering. Yet, in our Christian faith, Good Friday goes hand in hand with Easter Sunday. As today we focus on Christ's suffering, Easter brings the celebration of his glorious resurrection. Christ knew great pain, yet he also knew the joy of new life in the resurrection and he wishes to share that new life with us. When he appeared to his disciples after the resurrection, he still bore the marks of the nails in his hands and the mark of the spear in his side. But the wounds were transformed by the new life of the resurrection.

As we celebrate this Good Friday, some of us may be carrying some sadness. It might be the burden of illness. It might be some personal sorrow that weighs upon us. In our prayer this afternoon, we can turn to Christ with confidence, knowing that he feels with us in our sorrows. We can pray for the help we need in our personal struggles. We can pray for people around the world in all their struggles.

Sadly there are many regions of the world where people continue to suffer from ongoing wars. There are places suffering from famine. In our own country, some are still bearing the effects of the Covid pandemic. Some continue to suffer the consequences of bushfires or floods. In our own lives we have our own burdens to bear. Here this afternoon we can remember all who are in need.

May we find comfort as we remember that Christ is with us in times of sadness as well as in times of joy. May we find fresh hope as we remember that the Christ who suffered is now risen from the dead.

In our prayer this afternoon we can come to him with confidence. He's ready to help us bear our crosses. He's ready to share with us the peace and joy of his risen life.

Bishop Paul Bird CSsR