

On this Day - Friday of Lent 4

In the version of Morning Prayer I generally use, today we make use of Psalm 51, which is one of the psalms known as ‘Penitential Psalms’, I have been reminded of God’s loving presence in our lives. This may seem strange in a psalm that, at first sight, concerns only our awareness of having sinned and standing in need of God’s forgiveness, but *repentance* and *forgiveness* are, in the Bible, inextricably linked to each other and to a firm belief in God’s love for us. It is precisely in God’s love that we find forgiveness for our sins. As the Short Reading from Isaiah 53:11-12 makes clear, this is not an ‘easy’ forgiveness, but is made possible only by the sufferings of God’s ‘Servant’, Jesus Christ, who voluntarily undergoes suffering and death so that we may be forgiven. We are freely offered this forgiveness by God, regardless of how severe, even appalling, our offences may be – all we have to do is ‘buy into’ this forgiveness by *repenting* of our sins and then trying to live the life that God wishes us to live. The sacramental life of the Church is God’s great gift to us to enable us to enjoy and make present in our lives the fullness of God’s gifts to us, which reach their culmination and fulfilment in our union with him in his kingdom and by anticipation, in varying degrees, here on earth.

In these days, when the precariousness of human life is made very real to us on our television screens and through our other media, we need to hold on to the great joy that is set before us by God. The Father has sent his only-begotten Son into the world to give us true life, life with him that lasts forever and asks so little in return. He has shown us how much

he loves us through the self-sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. We see in the self-offering of so many 'ordinary' people who, in these days, risk their lives for others some reflection of God's love for all of humanity. As we express our thanks to these 'heroes' of our times for what they do for others, let us remember to give thanks to the Triune God for the far greater sacrifice he has made for each one of us.

As we approach the last days of Lent, may God grant you protection and safety and pour into your hearts the love of God, the spirit of repentance and the courage to be of service, in whatever way in which God calls us, to our fellow men and women.

Father David