

Easter Message from Right Reverend Declan Lang, Bishop of Clifton

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I was asked the other day whether I get lonely. My answer was yes. But then I said: "I think everyone gets lonely at some time in their life." Loneliness is a human experience. It can happen when we are alone or it can happen when we are in a crowd and feel isolated and cut-off from others. We are not made for loneliness because we are made for relationships. We flourish as individuals when we are relating to other people in a loving way. We are made to love and be loved.



Part of the suffering that Jesus had to endure was the experience of being left alone to die. He had to face up to the accusations of his enemies but perhaps more painfully, when he needed the human support of his followers, all but one fled. Jesus even felt abandoned by God. He cried out: "My God, My God why have you deserted me?"

Today the cross of loneliness and isolation is still carried painfully by many people. There is the loneliness of illness and bereavement. There is the loneliness of broken relationships and the deep hurt that is caused. There is the loneliness of the asylum seeker who not only knows what it is to be an outcast from his or her own country but is still treated as an outcast by people who do not know the story of homes destroyed and families tortured and killed. There is the loneliness of unemployment. There is the loneliness of being different in some way or other from the majority of people. In loneliness we can feel crushed and think we are dying a slow death.

But Good Friday and its loneliness, suffering and death is not the end of the story. There is Easter! There is hope and new life. Why? Because Jesus embraced the cross. He freely accepted it and said if anyone wanted to follow him, he or she must take up their own cross in the same way. Jesus sacrificed himself out of love for all people and transformed the cross from an instrument of death to the tree of life. He was not abandoned.

Even though life seems very dark at times, the love of God is more powerful and nothing, not even loneliness, pain or death, can come between us and the love God has for us and the whole of creation.