

Let the light of the Risen Christ shine in your heart

2012 Easter message from Dr Philip Freier, Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne

A real stumbling block to faith for many is the question: 'How can an all-loving and all-powerful God allow suffering and evil in the world?'

It is an all-too-real question for all who suffer violence. The writer Elie Wiesel describes in his book 'Night' the hanging of a boy he witnessed in Auschwitz. When someone asked 'Where is God now?' a voice within him replied, 'He is here. He is hanging here on the gallows.'

And this, of course, is the meaning of Good Friday, so called because this is the day God entered the suffering of humanity and all of creation, through the death of His Son Jesus who was nailed to a cross.

Through this most cruel and agonising of deaths, Jesus entered our suffering – and allowed himself to experience all the terror and evil of such a slow and painful death.

Through this great act of self-sacrifice Jesus demonstrated his supreme love for all humankind, and in the deepest personal way for you, and me, and indeed every human being.

But the darkness of evil and death did not overcome the light of Jesus. As St John says in the prologue to his Gospel, "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it."

One of the most beautiful and moving services of Easter Day is the Dawn service, with the rising of the Sun dispelling the darkness of night, and the lighting of the Easter fire, and then the Easter Candle, to symbolise the light of Christ.

One of the most ancient and beautiful prayers of the Church, the Benedictus, captures the profound joy of this coming of the Light:

In the tender compassion of our God:

the dawn from on high shall break up upon us,

To shine on those who dwell in darkness

And the shadow of death:

And to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Jesus said 'I am the light of the world, and whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'

Easter is an invitation from the living, risen Christ to open our hearts to the light of his love, so as to dispel the darkness of whatever is holding us back from living by this light, and living as we are truly meant to be.

May the light of Christ warm your life and guide you into the way of peace this Easter, and may you always have the joy of knowing the Risen Jesus, our Saviour and Redeemer.