

Easter message from Bishop Greg O'Kelly, Bishop of Port Pirie Diocese and Apostolic Administrator of Adelaide Archdiocese.

Out of the ashes of disillusionment

The fire that destroyed much of Notre Dame Cathedral has shocked the world but there is symbolism in this grand building which has held in store so much humanity being reduced to ashes. As we look at Good Friday and Easter we can think of the Church and its need to be rebuilt out of the ashes of disillusionment, just as Notre Dame will be rebuilt.

So we come to Easter with a sense of hope, as well as a realisation of our failures and our need for redemption. We were all there at the cross, with the cruelty of the executions, the evil and the plotters, we were there with the denial of Peter, the betrayal of Judas. All parts of our humanity were there.

We need the renewal that Easter brings. 'Behold I make all things new', says the Lord in the Scriptures. When we're looking at Jesus we wonder why it is called Good Friday. It was hardly good for Jesus. He started off as a wonderfully popular village preacher, a wonder worker; they came in thousands to witness him. And then he died alone, more or less, executed like a criminal, the death of a slave, deserted.

It seems to be the end of the story. But in fact it was the initiation of a beginning because in the Christian belief Jesus rose again. He transformed people. People who were disillusioned, cowards who had lost hope were suddenly restored, renewed. This is what the Christian belief continues to be.

It was a death for Jesus but it was good for us in the sense that no greater love is there than to lay down one's life for his friends. And the most innocent one was executed in the company of criminals. He didn't disassociate himself from them, he even stayed with the guilty and he asked for forgiveness for those who did evil to him, and he asked for mercy for the thief. This is the goodness of Jesus that came right through.

The Father endorsed him and said this is my beloved son. And so Jesus was raised again. And that's why the spirit of hope is there for all of us. Lent starts with the ashes and ends with the fire, the flint lights the flame at the Vigil on Easter Saturday, a great symbolism of fire coming out of dead, inert matter. And this is what has happened to us: to go from death to life, from darkness to light, the spark of our human existence, the spark of our soul never dies but goes to greater life in the resurrection, returning to the Father.

Life is a gift God gives forever, said Pope John Paul II, and that is why we are jubilant and exalt at Easter that Jesus was raised from the dead and we will be raised too.