

**Edmund Rice Centre**

*Memorial Mass*

*October 27, 2023*

Gospel: '**And Jesus wept!**' in response at the death of his friend Lazarus. There were no words and there are still no words. But we are also here to be in solidarity and find hope together rather than struggling alone.

***There are no words*** (James Maher msc) excerpted

*There are no words when grief is raw*

*When life is torn away in a moment.*

*There are no words, we cannot speak;*

*Our hearts are numb.*

*There are no words to speak the loss*

*Of life betrayed and spirits broken.*

*There are no words to ease the pain'*

*The light has gone....*

*When Jesus wept for all the world*

*The tears of God were given to us.*

*The One who loves us into birth*

*Shares our pain.*

*There are no words, but there is hope.*

*A gentle light shines in the darkness*

*The softest flame, almost unseen,*

*Burning without a cause.....*

*There are no words when grief is raw*

*When life is torn away in a moment.*

*There are no words, but there is hope,*

*Our hearts are free.*

The world feels very heavy. Life hurts. We are living with unprecedented grief — pandemic, climate crisis, natural disasters such as earthquakes and hurricanes, racial violence, economic pain, and war. And if you dare to love, be prepared to grieve. Nothing prepares us for those painful losses that tear our world apart: the death of a loved ones and confreres; the loss of health and independence through illness or injury; the loss of an intimate relationship for whatever reason; and the loss of employment. Sometimes we experience several losses at once, especially when we experience life-shattering events such as violent crime, freak accidents, unexpected death, and so on. We all fear such losses and try to avoid them, but sooner or later, if we live long enough, we all have them. There are dire warnings about climate change with more and more massive climate-related catastrophes flooding cities, heating the oceans, and burning up big swaths of forests (and all the homes in those forests). It is not just climate change. Fascism is taking a hold in many parts of the world as people elect people because they think their lives will be safer when protected by the biggest bully.

People are consumed by grief when they look out at the world, the wars and people maimed and slaughtered, especially innocent children. We emerged from the pandemic weighed down with grief and are now confronted by the horrors of war in Ukraine and Israel/Palestine, earthquakes in Turkey and Afghanistan.

Australia has just voted a big 'no' to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and failed to accept a gracious hand offered to us. We have in different ways shared the loss as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people grieve after giving themselves in various ways to campaign. Two members of Common Grace wrote recently, 'Even as we lament, we draw solace and comfort from this: that we still stand united, and that there are so many of us willing to act together for justice.' ***Connecting heart to heart is more valuable than any words we could ever say.***

Real strength is to feel our grief in full, acknowledge its reality and that there are losses we cannot avoid. We have many reasons for despair as we read/watch the news. We should approach grief with reverence, engaging it, sitting with it, mulling it over and recognizing it is worthy of our time. Grief is the price of love. To love another means that at some point in time, there will be grieving. The more you love, the more you grieve. To love also means grieving with. It is about connecting heart to heart.

Faith traditions point to compassion as a great goal. As we experience our grief for the world we can identify with the pain of the world. If we are courageous enough to feel our grief for the world, and understand its roots in compassion, we will understand how to be part of its rebuilding. Grief, understood as compassion for a world in distress, can move us to action. Despite facing some hard things as individuals, our nation, and our world - where the earth can seem to crack open and shatter into many pieces. But looking for goodness, we saw people hold on and look for the small moments of connection of love and humour and embrace. We fall and we get up again and again and though things may crumble around us we will live because we have to because that is all there is – love and we have to fight for it. All we need to do is *participate!* My life is not about me, but about a willing participation in a larger mystery. Paul says: *'The only thing that finally counts is ..... the mercy of God'* (Romans 9:16).

In Japan, there is the concept of Kintsugi. Kintsugi expresses the restoration of beauty that has been broken. Lawyer and advocate for trafficked people, Shim Fujimura presented a 15<sup>th</sup> century noodle bowl to Pope Francis. It had been mended with gold lacquer to explain her work battling human trafficking and caring for its victims. She says, *'Although this is one of the darkest, most broken places in the world, there are lives born into this place, which means there is hope.'*

Like many people, the **kintsugi bowl** represents the experience of trauma. She says, *'we are all kintsugi' and 'God reaches out to all of us in our brokenness and glues it all together with his gold.'* And so, we in turn are to pour ourselves into the lives of others, into their fractures like the bowl needing lacquer. Through our own brokenness we see courage at the wound. How we see 'reality-what is' determines how we respond to life and living. By our presence we can say to invisible people, 'I see you.' It is about a lifestyle of kindness, rather than just acts of kindness. Faith is not about believing certain things to be true but about having a stance that leads to transformation – that includes peace, love, joy, patience, and humility. It is about facing the unknown and seeing Jesus turn around, offer us his hand, and say, *'We're going to walk across the unknown together.'*

The challenge is to carry grief in one hand and gratitude in the other and to be stretched large by them. If we carry only grief, we bend towards cynicism and despair. If we have only gratitude, we become saccharine without developing much compassion for other people's suffering. Grief keeps the heart fluid and soft, which helps make compassion possible.

What is important is that we allow our hearts to be porous. There is no blueprint for coping with grief. There is only presence. *It involves listening, holding space, withholding judgment, connecting emotionally, and communicating the healing message of 'You're not alone.'* If we want to experience connection, then we need to take the risk of being vulnerable. We must not prevent ourselves from feeling connected to the world around us. The more you love, the more you grieve. To love also means grieving with. It is about connecting heart to heart.

*Fr Claude Mostowik msc*

***This reflection was based on Ecclesiastes 3, Psalm 130 and excerpts from John 11.***

***A reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes***

There is time for everything,  
a season for every purpose on the earth  
a season to be born and a season to die;

a season to plant and a season to harvest;  
 a season to hurt and a season to heal;  
 a season to tear down and season to build up;  
 a season to lament and a season to laugh;  
 a season to love and a season to abstain;  
 a season to embrace and a season to part;  
 a season to mourn and a season to dance;  
 a season to seek and a season to lose;  
 a season to hold and a season to let go;  
 a season to tear and a season to mend;  
 a season to be silent and a season to speak;  
 a season to love and season to hate;  
 a season for hostilities and a season for making peace..

***This is the Word of God***

***Responsorial Psalm***

***R./I place all our trust in you, my God  
 all my hope is in your mercy***

Help, O God—I cry out to you from the depths!  
 Hear my cry for help!  
 Listen hard! Open your ears!  
 Listen to my cries for mercy.

***R./I place all our trust in you, my God  
 all my hope is in your mercy***

If you, God, kept records on wrongdoings,  
 who would stand a chance?  
 As it turns out, forgiveness is your habit,  
 and that's why you're worshiped.

***R./I place all our trust in you, my God  
 all my hope is in your mercy***

I pray to God—my life a prayer—  
 and wait for what God will say and do.  
 My life's on the line before God,  
 waiting and watching till morning,  
 waiting and watching till morning.

***R./I place all our trust in you, my God  
 all my hope is in your mercy***

O Israel, wait and watch for God—  
 with God's arrival comes love,  
 with God's arrival comes generous redemption.  
 No doubt about it—God will redeem Israel,  
 buy back Israel from captivity to sin.

***R./I place all our trust in you, my God  
 all my hope is in your mercy***

***A reading from the Gospel according to John***

A man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.... It was her brother Lazarus who was sick. So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Master, the one you love so very much is sick."

When Jesus got the message, he said, "This sickness is not fatal. It will become an occasion to show God's glory by glorifying God's Son."

.....When Jesus finally got there, he found Lazarus already four days dead..... Martha heard Jesus was coming and went out to meet him. Mary remained in the house.

Martha said, "Jesus, if you'd been here, my brother would not have died. Even now, I know that whatever you ask God he will give you."

Jesus said, "Your brother will be raised up."

Martha replied, "I know that he will be raised up in the resurrection at the end of time."

"You don't have to wait for the End. I am, right now, Resurrection and Life. The one who believes in me, even though he or she dies, will live. And everyone who lives believing in me does not ultimately die at all. Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Master. All along I have believed that you are the Messiah, the Son of God who comes into the world."

After saying this, she went to her sister Mary and whispered in her ear, "Jesus is here and is asking for you."

The moment she heard that, she jumped up and ran out to him. Jesus had not yet entered the town but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When her sympathising Jewish friends saw Mary run off, they followed her, thinking she was on her way to the tomb to weep there. Mary came to where Jesus was waiting and fell at his feet, saying, "Master, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her sobbing and the Jews with her sobbing, a deep anger welled up within him. He said, "Where did you put him?"

"Come and see," they said. *And Jesus wept.*

The Jews said, "Look how deeply he loved him."

***This is the Good News of Jesus, the Christ.***