



4th Sunday of Easter Biv
Excerpts from Acts 4, 1 John 3, John 10

To Love

Jesus loves, and calls us to love like him, genuinely looking to the good of others
Fr David King – 25th April 2021

Please read the Gospel before looking at this (John 10.11-18)

1. Sr Anne Rosa

I'm sure you are all aware that there's been some stuff happening in Myanmar recently. I don't know all the details, and no doubt it's a complicated situation, but, as far as I can understand, a military coup seized power at the beginning of the year. And since then the people have been protesting against the coup and calling for the return of democracy and that's what all the clashes have been about. Over time the military have been responding to these protests with ever increasing force which is quite worrying.

- What you may *not* be aware of, however, is what happened a few months ago, on 1st February, in the northern part of the country. On that day protests started in the capital city of that state and there were many clashes, and at one point the military started massing around this group of young protestors and things were not looking good. The soldiers were gearing up to chase and possibly shoot them.
- But, nearby was a convent, and some of the sisters were outside the convent peacefully protesting against the military coup as well. One of the young sisters, Sr Anne Rosa, was there with her little placard that simply read "Justice and democracy will prevail".
- When the police were getting ready to attack the protestors, many of whom, as I've mentioned, were young people, Sr Anne Rosa did something incredible, she saw this horrific situation unfolding and very courageously stepped out into the space between the military and the protestors.
 - The military shouted at her to get out of the way, she refused, and started pleading with the armed forces not to shoot the civilians. Sr Anne fell to her knees with her arms opened wide pleading for restraint. But even as she did so, they opened fired on protestors and one man was shot in the head right in front of her.
- Two people were killed that day, which obviously is a tragedy, but journalists said that many more would have died were it not for the courageous actions of the nun who risked her own life for the sake of others. Apparently she had said to the military "Don't shoot them, just shoot me if you want to". Later, in a very tearful interview, all Sr Anne could say was that she loved her country, and was desperate for the police not to harm the young people.
- Watching the video was very moving actually. The images of this young Burmese nun on her knees in front of riot police with guns and shields, with tears falling down her cheeks were very powerful. The images were beamed around the world and many people were saying it was just like Tiananmen Square, all over again.

2. Jesus

- Now, I don't know about you, but to me it seems that love very much characterises the resurrection appearances. You have Jesus breaking bread with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. You have that moving encounter with Peter and John on the beach where Jesus shares breakfast with them and forgives Peter for all that's happened, and commissions him into service. And of course you have that tantalising encounter in the garden with Mary Magdalene, where Jesus reveals his identity to her in a moment that assumes a great intimacy. You can see Jesus' love for his disciples and friends shining through in these encounters.
- And of course love is very much at the heart of the Gospel today as well. The good shepherd is not in this for his own profit, but for the good of the sheep. This is a love that transcends sense. What shepherd would lay down his life for his sheep?
 - Sheep are expendable and replaceable!! Certainly not worth dying for! Well, apparently these sheep are worth dying for and this shepherd is prepared to do it...and, of course, he did. And maybe that's the whole of the Good News there in a nutshell, God's incredible love for us, revealed in Jesus the Good Shepherd, who followed through his words, with his life.

3. David

- So, yes, love is what today is all about, a love that does not count the cost. Jesus spoke about it, he put it into action, but more to the point he calls us to emulate this love. And the joy of it is that you see Peter and John responding to this call in the first reading, they're carrying this on. In the reading they're being interrogated by the authorities because they've healed a man who has been unable to walk for years. They get in a whole load of trouble because of this act of kindness. But they don't mind, they're not counting the cost, they just feel compelled to be loving others as Jesus loved them.
- And this is such a challenge to me, as, if I'm honest, I know full well that this is kind of love is way beyond me at the moment, and that I miserably fall so short. Genuinely putting others before yourself is hard. It's totally counter-intuitive to put others needs before your own, though if you are parents of course you may have had a glimpse into that, but even then it's so easy to wriggle your way out of it. It's way easier said than done, and I find it nearly impossible, yet I know that this is where Jesus calls me, and, if I let him, this is where he will lead me.
- Today, 4th Sunday of Easter is known as Good Shepherd Sunday as we always have a reading from John 10 which is all about Jesus the Good Shepherd. And, because of this theme, it's also become a Sunday on which we are encouraged to pray for vocations. To the priesthood, to consecrated life.
- And yes, it's true, that the Church has always been blessed by men and women who have been willing to give of themselves totally to God and to the Church, and God willing we will always have those people and if you feel a call please come and speak to me. We need more Sr Anne Rosa's and more priests. But we first need to recognise that we are *all* called to be disciples – people who have known God's love, revealed in Jesus, in their lives, and who are willing and wanting to love others in the same way.

Jesus, teach me to be your disciple, and help me to love others and you love me.