

INCONCEIVEABLE LOVE

*When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

As I sat before the Blessed Sacrament during the time of Morning Prayer, my thoughts turned back to my previous reflection about the greatness of the creative God and my eyes were drawn up to the wonderful crucifix hanging above the altar and I realised how great was the love that God has for us, so great it too is inconceivable. I have recently been reading about Saint Francis of Assisi and how when he looked at the dying Jesus nailed to the cross, he wept. Jesus is divine, the Son of God, yet, because of his love for us, he set aside his divinity and became one with us but he did not come in majesty, he came as a vulnerable baby born to a woman in the most humble of circumstances. Soon after his birth the, the family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, were threatened and forced into exile. When they finally were able to return to their homeland, they lived a humble and ordinary life in obscurity. When Jesus finally began his ministry, he was persecuted, tortured and put to a cruel, humiliating and agonising death. Jesus knew what would happen to him but did not shirk away from it. He humbly accepted it. "Father, not my will but thine be done."

*Forbid it Lord, that I should boast.
Save in the death of Christ, my God
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.*

I cannot compare myself to Saint Francis nor can I claim to have been moved to tears as he was but I was moved to think of my own life and how blessed it has been. But why? I have done very little to deserve it. I realised how little I have appreciated God's infinite love for us and how little gratitude I have shown throughout my life for all the graces and blessings he has bestowed upon me. I realised how ignorant I have been and how unaware of other people's suffering. I have been a member of this parish for more than five decades. When I was first asked to take the Blessed Sacrament to the sick and housebound, I was overwhelmed with joy but now, with age, I wonder if perhaps all I do has become a habit.

*See from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e're such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown.*

In this jubilee year of hope, I want to try to follow the example of Saint Francis. If I can accept my partial loss of sight and hearing and treat them as blessings rather than disabilities and if I can accept all the aches and pains that come with age and the things I was once able to do and can now no longer do with humility and offer them in thanksgiving for all God's gifts; if I can gladly accept all the little things that usually annoy me as opportunities to give thanks to him for his infinite love and if, when people are unkind to me, I can accept it without response or comment then perhaps I will begin to experience that 'perfect joy' that Saint Francis spoke about. Perhaps when I look up at the dying Christ I, too, will be moved to tears.

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life my, all.*

O Jesus, you have given me so much and I have so little to give you in return. I have only myself and I offer myself to you, all that I am, all that I have and all that I do.