

We have an innate capacity to grumble – most of my days consist of attempts to keep the grumbling at bay, usually in the form of complaints against other people, the temptation to pass on blame, to avoid recognising my own fallibility: the responsibility I have to myself. We have it as children and it was beautifully rendered for me in a small ditty made up by a child which we heard yesterday as we tackled the terror of exposure which poetry can bring: it went something like this referring to long walks in the Welsh countryside:

*Wales*  
*There's always another hill,*  
*And a daffodil.*

You remember those long trips with children, or as a child “*Are we there yet, Mum (or Dad)? We're almost there* “. She says. “*You said that half an hour ago?*” Perhaps we need children to remind ourselves of our own capacity to grumble. Yes I was like that once but also of their capacity to see the bright side, another daffodil. Yes, there always is another hill in this life another hurdle to overcome, a suffering we would rather do without: an incapacity perhaps, a limitation, another person, a situation, but it's there and it's not going to go away, despite all our grumbling and prayer. This isn't necessarily to embrace suffering as a good in itself – there may be a way to the top of the mountain by an easier route but often the top can only be reached by a steady slog up and down the false summits which life also provides. We haven't got there yet., any of us. It's the cross we all have to bear – the imperfection of it all, the resistance of others to our own self-will, the lack of stature we may have in the eyes of others. But we are not alone in this. God becomes man that we might not be alone in this journey towards death, this amazing landscape of false summits culminating in the false summit of death. God in Christ walks the path with us, tackles each of the ups and downs we all face so that we too might endure, may have hope, may know that our own grumbling is not who we really are. You can see where this is going but I'm not a great fan of daffodils, too many in too many places now, another false summit blinding us to all those other hidden treasures the landscape provides: the lichen on the rocks, the spider in its web, the snake in the grass briefly glimpsed and so beautiful The suffering is there but it's not the whole story. There is beauty in that other person who always irritates, in the stubborn resistance of things to our will, in the supposed enemies in our lives which makes us who we are. Jesus faces these fears in their fullness. They don't go away, they don't become less, indeed they eventually kill him but the tree on which he dies is glad. It has borne our Saviour – the only one to take us through the false summit of death, and the many false summits that pepper our lives.

*For God sent his Son into the world*  
*Not to condemn the world*  
*But so that through him the world might be saved*

In all its grumbling.

Ps For those who may have celebrated Sunday Week 24C today instead – blinded by yet another false summit -the readings say very much the same: the turning aside to worship a calf of molten metal instead of facing the steady slog through the desert, the conversion of St Paul- the greatest of sinners, the ready reception of the prodigal son by his father who knows only how to love.

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