

Rector's Ramblings – March 2024 (Spring Blossoms and Rising Hope)

As the crisp winter air begins to soften and delicate hues of green peek through the hedgerows, our hearts turn towards the promise of spring and the joy of Easter. Here in Suffolk, with its patchwork fields and picturesque villages, this season holds a special resonance. From the lambs frolicking in the meadows to the vibrant daffodils carpeting the churchyards, nature itself seems to sing a hymn of renewal.

And yet, as we witness the beauty around us, we also carry the weight of the world – the anxieties, losses, and uncertainties that linger despite the changing seasons. It is within this bittersweet reality that we embark on our Lenten journey, a time for reflection, introspection, and drawing closer to God.

This year, why not approach Lent not just as a period of sacrifice, but also as an opportunity for spiritual growth? Perhaps you could commit to read about the themes of Lent and Easter. Maybe you could volunteer some time to a charity (or your local church), or offer practical support to those in need. Or perhaps you could simply dedicate some quiet time each day for prayer and meditation, allowing yourself to be enveloped by God's love and grace.

Remember, our Lenten journey is not one we walk alone. As part of the wider Church of England family, we find strength and encouragement in our shared faith. Join us for our special Lenten services (www.achurchnearyou.com is a good place to start as it lists services for our parishes but also many parishes across England – handy if you are travelling to be with family or friends), where we will delve deeper into the scriptures, offer prayers for one another, and find solace in the company of fellow believers.

On Mothering Sunday (10th March), we celebrate the unique bond between mothers and children, reflecting on the maternal love that God bestows upon each of us. Take this opportunity to cherish the mothers in your life, be it your own mother, grandmother, or another nurturing figure. Remember, God's love encompasses all forms of mothering, the quiet acts of care and compassion that sustain and guide us throughout our lives.

As Palm Sunday (24th March) arrives, waving branches in remembrance of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, we anticipate the momentous events that unfold in the following week. Join us for the Maundy Thursday (28th March) service in Clare, commemorating the Last Supper and Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet – a powerful reminder of humility and service. Good Friday (29th March), a day of sombre reflection, will be marked with 2 special services (a 9am reflection in Stoke by Clare, and a 7pm service of Compline in Poslingford) both focusing on the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross.

Then, the glorious dawn of Easter Sunday arrives! Join us at any one of our joyful Easter service across the benefice and throughout the day, filled with music, prayer, and the triumphant message of Christ's resurrection.

Remember, dear friends, the promise of Easter extends far beyond the Easter Sunday celebrations. It is a promise that carries us through the challenges of life, reminding us that even in the darkest moments, the light of Christ can shine through, offering hope, redemption, and everlasting life. As we journey through this spring season, let us walk together, embracing the beauty of the natural world, the solace of our faith, and the enduring hope that Easter offers.

With Lent and Easter Blessings

Mark

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(Rector)