



March Team Ministry

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

Welcome

Second Sunday of Lent ~ 28th February 2021

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 279232 or at andrew.marchurch@gmail.com

The rules for Church services have not changed under this lockdown, but with the rise in infections everyone is asked to be especially vigilant. For some people a greater degree of isolating is sensible. No one should feel pressurised in attending church

We have Church services with social distancing, and also, for the foreseeable future, our zooming, emailing and leaflet deliveries. We want people to have a genuine choice. We are also trying to allow other aspects of the church's life to happen. Ideas and suggestions welcome.

St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am

St Mary's Sundays 9.15am

St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am

"Stay in touch, take care, keep safe, continue praying and God bless."

Stations of the Cross

Every Lent for the last 25 or more years I have led weekly services of Stations of the Cross. Sadly not possible this year, so I offer these reflections to walk and meditate on the stations through Lent.

Last week we looked at the first two, Jesus being condemned and taking up his cross. The traditional third station has Jesus falling, something that re-occurs at the seventh and ninth stations, and we will reflect on these together next week. Today we look at the stations where Jesus encounters other people, his mother Mary, Simon of Cyrene who is compelled to carry Jesus' cross, a woman traditionally named as Veronica who wipes his face, and the weeping women of Jerusalem at the city gate.

IV. Jesus meets his mother

*Lord, how can a Mother see her Son suffer and not suffer herself?
Yet, step by step, she stayed with you, stable to Nazareth and on to Cana.*

In a short while, she will be found standing at the Cross.

Now in this press of Passover people, she is with you.

Walk with me, Mary, on the path I must travel. Stay with me.

Mary present by bonds of love, and how terrible for her to see the bone of her bone, the flesh of her flesh being torn, ripped and ultimately destroyed. No parent should ever wish to see their child suffer, let alone die; but equally they do feel they have to be there. Mary was part of the remarkable events that we celebrate at Christmas, yet sometimes it seems she did not know who her Son really was. She now sees the implications before her. She had

been told often enough that a sword would pierce her heart; now it is stabbing right through. In much of the tradition she now sees it all though, watching at the cross, carrying his body for burial and arriving at the tomb on Easter morn. Being there changes her; and transforms her understanding of, and relationship with, her son. Maybe that reminds us that however much we think our lives are already intertwined with Jesus, walking the way of the cross, encountering the Easter sepulchre afresh, can change us and our relationship with Jesus.

Grant to us, Lord, grant to your Church, the gift of mercy; that mercy which wants nothing but each other's good. Help us to learn from her motherhood how to love each person as a beloved child; how to become signs of your loving, supporting care.

It is you, O Lord, who come to meet all those who are abandoned.

V. Simon is compelled to carry Jesus' cross

*Lord, Simon was a face from the crowd,
an extra pair of hands to share a load.
May we give to others a lift on the way,
expecting nothing, offering everything.*

Simon, visiting Jerusalem, happens to be there at the wrong place at the wrong time, or rather, it surprisingly turns out, at the very best time and very best place. Whether he assists carrying the cross all the way up the green hill of cavalry, or manages to slip away, he plays his unexpected, unplanned, and undesired part. There are legends that have the swop being made more permanent and Simon dying on the cross and Jesus escaping. We take Simon's part to know that we too can assist others, to know that Jesus is fully human and the whole crucifixion really dehumanises him too. Just as others play their parts in the crucifixion, soldiers, bystanders, rulers, without taking away what Jesus does for us on the cross, Simon reminds us that kindness and support can happen in the darkest situations, and whether they are voluntary or involuntary they still have value and can express love.

Loving Father, give us compassion. Teach us how to share the suffering of others and carry their burden. As your Son staggers to Calvary, we see we are in your debt. We understand we owe each other love. Help us to choose to love, whatever the cost.

It is you, O Lord, who stretch out your hand to each of us.

VI. A woman wipes Jesus' face

*Lord, who she was, where she came from does not matter.
She cared enough to risk all – and asked for nothing in return.*

Disproportionately women who meet Jesus on the road, it is as if men are only there for violence, strength, law and order. Mary there, by bonds of love and duty, Simon there through sheer accident, the wailing women there out of habit, and Veronica, well who knows why? Veronica, no background story, and no future consequences are recorded. Just one brief moment of compassion. Seize the moment, take the risk, act out of love, show ordinary humanity – it is always possible. And maybe what seems like a small and personal act can in the end be told around the world for many generations.

Father of light, no man has seen your face. Yet, through your loving Son, we see it become clear in the least of men, in the lost. Give us eyes to see, Lord, re-create us in your image.

It is you, O Lord, who look after all those who are exhausted.

VIII. Jesus meets weeping women of Jerusalem

*Lord, too often women have raised their voices at the folly of men.
Too often they have been ignored.
may we, their children, listen to their words and their cries;
and hearing them, hear you.*

The women who weep at the city gate seem to be a semi-permanent feature, maybe part of their begging strategy. It seems they were weeping for Jesus. But whereas Mary offers comfort by her presence, Simon by being pressganged, or Veronica with her refreshment, what these city-gate women offer Jesus, is rejected or returned to them. 'Do not weep for me!' Rather weep for your own children, your lot in life or the general hardship and injustice of the world. Jesus doesn't say, 'Dry your eyes, this is GOOD Friday!' We do need to really weep at, and for, the tragedies and hurts of the world; but as Jesus dies for the sin of the world, and is risen to show sin can be transformed and new life emerge, so we need not weep for Jesus, but we are invited to respond to where the road to the cross leads.

Father, you placed in each one of us the gift of compassion and the longing for justice. Help us to understand that to share another's pain is not enough: you call us to realise our responsibility for each other's pain and to lose our lives, as Jesus did, for all.

It is you, O Lord, who call each of us to fight against evil!