40 days of Lent with St James Parish



Ash Wednesday

Break my heart Lord, for what breaks yours.



2 Chronicles 7:14

"If my people, who are called by name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin and heal their land."

When is the night-time not the night-time?

The Scouts absolutely love Shrove Tuesday. More specifically, they love Pancake Day. Pancakes are easy to cook, fun to toss, and there is the chance to heap sugar, honey, jam or Nutella plus maybe some token lemon juice on your plate. Imagine 36 Scouts standing in groups of 6 around a table with a double gas burner frying pancakes. The hall fills with a thin haze of smoke and at the end of the evening you notice the distinct aroma of cooking oil on your

clothes as you make your way home. Pancake Day generally falls in the middle of the Kingston Schools half-term holiday, traditionally also the time for the first major outdoor Scout activity of the year: Spring Camp. We usually go to a campsite in the Hurtwood just south of Shere on the North Downs. There is a special sound and quality of light at



this time of year: there are no leaves on the trees, so the sunlight filters and shafts through the bare branches and catches the smoke from the fires as it hangs in the still air.

Anyone who has been camping in February will have enjoyed being woken. At this time of the year sunrise is not too early! It may be cold outside, and the frost may have rendered your tent stiff as a board, but you are warm and snug with your nose just peeping out of your sleeping bag. The air is clean and crisp and you can hear the sound of birdsong in the stillness as the natural world starts its day. But when is the start of day?

On Shrove Tuesday this year the sun will rise at 0712, but the birds will have been singing long before that. This is because the sun sheds light into the world long before its disk rises above the eastern horizon: early morning twilight time. Astronomers define the night as the time when the sun's rays have no effect on your ability to see stars in the sky. On February 16th this year astronomical twilight will begin at 0520. At 0558 you will begin to be able to distinguish vague outlines of buildings and objects (Nautical twilight), and by 0637 you will be able to see without the need for artificial light (Civil twilight). So when is the night-time no longer the night-time?

Maybe Lent is the period of twilight before the sun rises on Easter Day. A time to watch and listen to the wonders of God's creation so as to be renewed, reformed and ready to seize moment, and to enjoy the day.

Peter Morris

PCC Member and Group Scout Leader of 7th Malden (St James) Scout Group

Music for Lent

Hello St James People,

Lent is a rich season for music, painting, poetry, writing, thoughts and prayer. There is probably no season that has been more culturally inspiring. This Lent I am offering a toe in the ocean of that inspiration and hoping that you will join me. Every day I will post a piece of music that is appropriate to Lent that you can listen to if you wish. I am hoping that other people will share pictures, poems, writing, prayers – and comments (positive please...) on what we see and hear. I have some wonderful music lined up for you that I can't wait to share!

The main way to access this will be via the new St James Lent 2021 WhatsApp Group. You can join this by sending my your number by text or email. I can also send things by email and courier messages as necessary! I don't think I can manage anything for people who are not online for which I apologise.

Wishing you all increasing health and happiness as spring comes upon us; and an interesting and reflective Lent.

Hope to see you in the group,

Catherine Gilonis

07989 438353 cgilonis@gmail.com

Well, here we are in Lent which in 2021 sees a completely different situation in the world. We have not been able to meet as a family of Saint James within our beautiful church for such a long time now and even meeting with friends and family has been a trial because so many have not been able to do even that. Lockdown is not very nice at all and we worry about the future. But, Lent allows us to fix our minds of the important part of our lives.....our faith. Like Advent is a period of preparation for the coming of God's Son so Easter is the beginning of the faith in which we firmly believe and to really understand and

get excited by that we need a period of preparation. This can take many forms including Bible reading....getting fully immersed in the life and teachings of Christ by reading a Gospel piece daily and then meditating on what it means and how it affects our lives......prayer in which we focus on the story and seek God's love and support to help us through that story and give us the strength to allow ourselves to completely trust in His promises.....coming to understand why Jesus followed the path He did even to Calvary and realising especially today that there are times when our faith is greatly tested......but that is where Lent really comes in. A time for reflection of course but a time to know that at its end the greatest gift that we can ever have will once again become more apparent to us. Lent can also be a time when we accept the pains that come with earthly life as Our Lord himself did but to allow God's promises and Love to swell within us. We may not be together physically but at this time we are surely together in love, thought and prayer and that will bring us through until once again we can share together the Joy that we know will come.

Fr.Clive

Noah Part 1.

The number 40 is occurs many times in the Bible. In the story of Noah and the flood it rains for 40 days.

This was a time of judgement – God closed the door on the Ark and let the waters flood the earth.

It was a time of cleansing, a time of renewal, a time of waiting, and ultimately a time of promise with dry land at the end, and a rainbow. The rainbow is God's picture of promise painted in the sky, a masterpiece renewed for each generation.

And God's promise is the promise of grace and forgiveness – fresh starts and time to make amends.

The rainbow does not promise that there would never again be consequences for sin – because sin reaps its own consequence as surely as night follows day and winter follows summer – but the rainbow says that never again will God close the door.

Knock and the door will be open to you we are promised.

This Lent think about the waters that which threaten to flood your life. And ask God to open the door to his ark of protection and carry you to dry land. Is there an area of life where you need a fresh start? Every time you see a rainbow – remember Noah, his own 40 days, and the promise of grace after hardship.

Noah Part 2.

In the story of Noah's Ark I have always been intrigued that God himself seems transformed by the experience – and moves from judgement and curse back to his original vision of blessing. Starting with Noah he begins to bless again – and open the windows of heaven, not to pour down destruction and rain, but blessing and abundance on those who will listen to his voice and obey his commands.

I'm also struck that you don't have to be perfect to receive God's blessing – almost immediately after getting off the boat Noah gets drunk and lies around naked. He has found the 40 days really hard clearly – and I think he gives us permission to find life hard too. To get it wrong sometimes.

Noah is not exactly the traditional picture of a Saint – but so often God does not choose who we might think is worthy, he doesn't pick goody two shoes (perhaps because Goody two shoes is so busy polishing their own shoes to make themselves look good that they fail to let God's glory shine through them?)

No, God wants ordinary people, drunken Noah types - who will just say yes, even when God asks us to do strange things – like build a huge ark on dry land. God calls people who will listen to their Father in heaven and can ignore the scoffs and taunts of others.

But Noah also gets it right – the most telling part of his character is perhaps that the first thing he does getting off the boat is build an altar. He praises God first in his life.

In a rather touching way, it is actually the smell of the offering that prompts God to promise "Never again."

This Lent, without demanding perfection, how can we make our lives and our offerings smell sweet to God?

Sacrifice

Ephesians 5: 1-12 says our lives smell sweet to God when we live a life of love – love is what sacrifice looks like in action. Every act of genuine love involves sacrifice, and every authentic sacrifice involves love.

Too often though we try and love without sacrifice and sacrifice without love. The first turns love into lust, and satisfying the flesh, and makes us self-seeking.... that is true of any relationship or passion. The second turns us into martyrs... self-righteous, counting the cost, sometimes bitter and carrying a chip on the shoulder.

Why not make it a Lenten discipline to read Paul's letter to the Ephesians and ask God how to "live a life worthy of our calling" as it encourages us to do? It is fantastic letter on living a sacrificial life of love.

Lent thoughts

Right now everything is difficult and the coming Lent just feels like another burden. We have been dealing with the pandemic for a long time. Our church lives have obviously been disrupted and the usual sacramental and musical support is sadly missing. Great efforts are being made to support us but the pattern has changed.

However, although it may be a long road, things are beginning to improve slowly. There is the transformation of the vaccine and spring is ahead even if not for a little while. If Lent is here then we know that Easter, the core of the celebration of our Faith, will follow. So the chance to put our spiritual house in order ready for change might be welcome.

As Lent begins each year it sometime feels to us that the season has its own influence. We do not make all the decisions about what happens. Just as the gravitational pull keeps the moon in orbit around the earth so the moon is pulling the other way exerting its force. Lent draws us in. We are only one side of the process. So if we do our best we can trust that we will be helped. Although of course every year things go wrong. We start with good intentions but our attempts to develop holiness are not, as a rule, impressively effective. Hopefully we learn from our mistakes.

So this year we will try again and look forward to the hope of Easter. We wish everyone a good Lent journey and an early spring.

God of our pilgrimage bring us with joy to the eternal city founded on the rock, and give to our earthly cities the peace that comes from above; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Anne and Clem

Supporting NHS workers

Part of my job is to support frontline staff. They are busy, tired, frustrated and are grieving not just for their patients and their relatives but in some cases for their own relatives and colleagues.

Working alongside front line staff has definitely made me reflect on what is, and has been going on during the pandemic, Supporting staff during tough times of sadness and loss has at times made me question my belief and how to move forward, how could this have been allowed to happen?

Have we as Christian frontline workers had time in this busy period to reflect that Lent is approaching? Had time to prepare ourselves and to think about what we might sacrifice this year. I think many would say that the last year has been a long lent for all of us. Nursing staff, like all of the population, have had to sacrifice not being with loved ones, losing loved ones, sometimes wanting to give up until this is all over and becoming frustrated when people do not follow guidance on face coverings for example. In some cases knowing that they are working in a highly contagious environment they are making the decision to stay away from home for long periods. We may all feel that we might want to withdraw from the sadness of this pandemic, dealing with death on a daily basis but as nursing staff they know that they must go on – for their patients, friends, family and community.

I feel that this time of reflection will teach me (us as frontline workers) that we can't force people to follow rules to keep us safe, we will always have to try and explain, pick up the pieces of those who may have been reluctant to follow and have then lost loved ones. Going into this period of lent I will be reflecting on how I have dealt with staff, friends and colleagues, the support I have given and how I might have improved on this within my daily life.

Sarai	ı Candı	У																					
	††† †	·ተተ	ተተተ	ተተ	ተተ	ተተ	₽ ₽	ተተ	ተተ	ተተ	· † †	ተ ተ	ተተ	ተተ	· ተ	ተተ	· †·	ተተ	‹ ተ	ተተ	· † ·	ተተ	Ŧ

Lent is the time when Jesus spent time alone fasting in the desert before being tempted by the devil and starting his ministry. In our Christian traditions we use Lent as a time undertake prayer, fasting both in terms of food and festivities and helping our neighbour.

Normally we would perhaps follow a bible study guide, give up coffee, chocolate, alcohol or sugar, not go out to the theatre, cinema or comedy store and undertake some good deeds for our neighbour or community.

This year I feel as though I have done my fair share of lent already. I've had plenty of time to reflect at home alone, done without pasta, tinned tomatoes and run as short, as I dare, of toilet paper, avoided shows and public events and been helping my neighbour in understanding the latest government COVID guidelines, organised electricians, plumbers, been doing some shopping for others and helped to book vaccine appointments.

When will enough Lent be enough Lent?

And yet we need to remember that God in Christ has promised to be with us at all times, to the end of time. We need to remember that it is never within our gift to choose the time we live through, but that whatever period of time that is, Jesus is with us. I give thanks for the many blessings and privileges of living at this time. I will also be reaching for my bible study guide, reflecting on my vices, and committing to do more for my neighbours and community.

Nigel	Ransom	

ተተ	•	ł ·	ŀ'	t	t	t	Ŧ	t	ł	ď		ŀ,	ł	Ŧ	t	Ŧ	t	ł	'ㅓ	1	f'	ł	t	Ŧ	t	Ŧ	ď	۱ ۱	1 1	۱,	ł	Ŧ	t	t	t	ᅥ	۱,	ť	t	t	ŀ		f '	ť	Ŧ	t	
----	---	-----	----	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	----	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	---	----	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------	-----	----	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	---	---	---	---	--	-----	---	---	---	--

A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH LENT

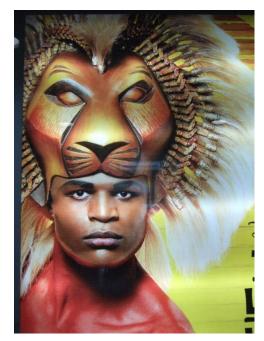
I often struggle to find something to 'give up' for the season of Lent but three years ago sitting in a hotel room in Rugby on Shrove Tuesday I had an `outside the box' thought. Looking at the desk lamp and its shadow, my thoughts drifted to a recent camera club talk on taking a photograph a day through the year. It ocurred to me that it might be an interesting exercise to take at least one photograph a day during Lent. I had no idea how difficult that was going to be.

No thought had been given to the restricted variety of routes and locations that I regularly visit over the weeks and the time spent in meetings and their preparation. I therefore found that I had to be innovative in finding differing

subjects, many of which were outside my comfort zone. The quality of the pictures was variable depending on the subject or time available for the shot.







In seeking my photographs, I had to keep my eyes open paying attention to what was happening around me and to ensure that I went out of my way to visit places when I had any free time. I also had to be ready with my camera.

I found that I had to persevere to achieve my goal whilst having to be keenly aware of my environment.

The desk lamp shone a light on the journey I was to take. Two of my favourite photographs were of the book circle display at the British Museum and an extract from a

poster for The Lion King on the Jubilee line platform at Waterloo. Books shine a light on the word of God and help us to understand the world about us. The poster illustrates the link between man and our environment. Things to ponder upon during this period of preparation.

Val Gibbens	PCC Secretary
******	*******

	Across		BIL	oie (Cross	wor	a x		V1		1	Dow	n	
1	Donkey (3)	1	Г	П		2	П	3					mes	senge
2	Jesus' Father (3)	Г									3,4)			
4	One of the twelve (9)	H						Н		4,3		chae	olog	ical fir
	4 5 6			7		8			9	Т	П	10		11
	12	13				14			1	5				
	16 17	L				18		Н	4	_	H	19	۹	-
						Н		Н			H	+		\dashv
	20					21								
	Didn't believe in resurrection (9)			22				Ш	1			lown		(T)
2	One of David's warriors (5)	H	ı	_			ı	Н		Ver	y sa	of Joi	ater	
	First word of the Lord's Prayer (3)	23	24			Т	25		7			257:11/20		(4,3) ures (
4	New Testament name for Noah (3)	20				120		20			uges ty (7	s (11 '))	
	Wish harm upon (5)	26		27		20		29			vout			
	Hole in the ground (3)	Г							11	Pie	ces o	of mo	ney	(7)
	Adversary (5)	30				1			24	Use	d to	liste	n (3)
8	Savour (5)	\vdash	-			-	-		25	Use	d to	see	(3)	
9	First woman (3)								26	Pos	ition	ıs (5))	
	Mother of John the Baptist			31					27	Mad	de a	vailal	ble (7)
	(9)								28	Sna	ake ((7)		
	Family of priests (9) Third son of Jacob (4)	32	33				34		29			ed a		with
3	Hates (8)						Г		33	Fini	ish (3)		
6	Assurances (8)	35		36		37	Н	38	34	Pos	sess	(3)		
0	Endured pain (8)	\vdash	_				_		35		800 CC	the A	Ama	lekites
1	Return from the dead (4)	ᆫ				_				(4)				
2	Intercessor (8)			39					36		7	ter o		Gree
	Decorating (8) Old Testament book of the	40	41			42	43		37	Alm	nost	sacri m (5)	fice	d by
	Bible (4)								38			(4)	100	
	The prince of Rosh, Mesech and Tubal (3)	45							41	Unf	aste	n (4)		
2	A wise insect (3)	40							43	FISI	tra	ps (4	•)	
14	A wise insect (3) Dwelling place of kings (6) Make bigger (8)		h	ttp://t	iblepuzzi	les.org	.uk						,	



A Reflection for Lent 2021

Wendy Morris
Parish Safeguarding Officer

The Russian word for the number 40 is 'sorok'. Historically used to describe a certain size of sack because that was the dimension required to accommodate 40 rabbit skins. In many cultures 40 has long been accepted as shorthand to represent a large approximate number - so it may be that those ancient trappers just meant a jolly big bag. Diverse faith traditions also use 40 in significant ways. Prayers in Hinduism and Sikhism consist of 40 couplets and Judaism, Islam and Christianity all use 40 days (nights or years) as generic temporal measures. They too perhaps are adopting a well understood method to tell us that actually it was 'a really long time'.

This use of 40 as a special number in holy scripture has also influenced contemporary language. In 1377 the port of Ragusa (modern day Dubrovnik) passed radical legislation to combat a deadly infection which was spreading across Europe – a kind of 14th century Covid if you will. The Black Death was being spread by rats on ships and with the disease out of control, all sailors were required to isolate for a period of time before entering the city. The length chosen was a biblical 40 days – 'quaranta giorni'. Which is of course where we get the word quarantine.

It seems to me that Lent is a bit like quarantine. A period when we reassess priorities, undisturbed by activities and treats which were previously a comfort and distraction. And this year Lockdown has been a mandatory and extended version, with a dose of isolation thrown in. By Easter 2021, we will have endured over a year of enforced confinement and self-denial. Some of us will have faced the permanent loss of someone close. All of us will have faced

giving up freedoms long taken for granted. But the quarantine-like qualities of both Lent and Lockdown offer an opportunity.

Jesus knew the value of withdrawing from society to draw strength for the trials ahead. Time to reflect is such a precious gift. Let's not squander it. Let's use our seclusion to garner our physical, mental and spiritual resources for the challenges waiting when this unbearable captivity is over. Because there are people who are going to need us - on the other side.



Lent is the most poignant time of the year for Christians and the Passion Flower, a native to the tropical Americas, reveals the complexity of Christ's sufferings. Its symbolism was first captured by the Mexican friar Emmanuel de Villegas, who reported it, with drawings in 1610.

The Passion flower symbolism includes,

- * The spiralled tendrils : the lash of Christ's scourging
- * The central flower column : the pillar of the scourging
- * The 72 radial filaments: the crown of thorns
- * The top three stigma : the three nails
- * The lower five anthers: the five wounds
- * The style : the sponge moistening Christ's lips with vinegar

- * The leaves : the head of the centurion's spear
- * The red stains: the drops of Christ's blood
- * The round fruit: the world that Christ came to save
- * The fragrance : the spices prepared by the women

During Lent we are accompanying Christ in a unique way, on a journey that will lead us to his death entirely for our sake, bringing God's humanity in touch with our humanity. Although we are spared all of this agony, it is a time for us to pause and reflect, to pray and above all, to stay very close to Jesus. On this journey we are given plenty of opportunities to understand his loving purpose. God's message is for all time, not just Lent, yet during this season we are called to follow him, to take up our cross, to enter into the mysteries of the passion and the mind of Christ. Most of all, we are asked to show the world pure love.

It was out of love that God gave us his only Son; It was out of love that Christ laid down his life for us; It was out of love that Christ called us to him; It was out of love that Jesus came quietly from the tomb. Jesus is this love.

Christine Menhennett

GIVING UP FOR LENT



As some of you may know before Covid I liked to go to Sherbourne Abbey about once a month to meditate for an hour or so in the Dorset Chapel. But since the start of the pandemic that joy has been impossible and I really miss it as friends will tell you. Yes, the journey down was lovely taking the back roads around Winchester and Salisbury travelling through the lovely town of

Shaftesbury and on to Sherbourne. The meditation was so special to me as I was away from my area and alone.

In the chapel apart from the odd visitor walking through. It was spiritually refreshing and that is something I look forward to restarting in the not too distant future for it was a time of peace, prayer and meditation which is often missing. But sometimes to see the true value of something is to miss it for a period of time. Whether visiting relatives, a favourite holiday destination, a gym, a football match, meeting friends for a meal out or just driving into the country for relaxation and renewal. One thing that we have missed is very special and that is Holy Communion not just as individuals but as a family of the church. Perhaps Lent, which is a time of 'giving up', is this year an ample opportunity to realise just how much the Eucharist gives us since it often appears in normal times to just be 'something one does each week'....it becomes a habit and perhaps we allow our minds to wander from what it should really mean. The words 'do this in remembrance of me' are something we might just say but it means just that. The bread and the wine are the way we connect with our Lord through His Last Supper.....and in that sense through His spirit within each one of us. It is the spiritual strength that we receive through this act for we remember how he gave his body and his blood for each one of us. I did this one Lent many years ago....I gave up Communion during the period - and yes what an opening of my heart on the first one on Easter morning. Somehow the whole Easter story came alive because I had missed something whose importance possibly I had allowed to slip. On taking it after the break I realised the strength that Christ's spirit had in fact never left and the joy was wonderful. Hopefully now I can relive that experience which I have not done again since Ordination because of the duties etc. involved.

Perhaps this Lent God is giving us a time for renewal by not taking communion so that on the next time we can take it either as a whole Church family or with a smaller number our hearts may be opened to the realisation of the power that the eucharist can give us.

We need not feel guilty because this is God's world and when we take it again we shall see it anew and probably also our own faith. That day we will probably rejoice more than we often do after the Communion services. So don't just give up something simple saying well it is Lent – give up something really important to our lives and see how it will reawaken your spiritual life when we again share it and those we have loved and lost will be sharing it with us because we are all one in God's world both now and evermore.

'Do this in remembrance of me.....'for I am the bread of Life'....a new beginning 2021 for us all.

Fr.Clive



Lent – The time of New life and Hope

It is appropriate that Lent, the period leading up to Easter, coincides with spring-time. This Christian celebration is not about the growth of nature, but there is a direct parallel. It is period for prayer and spiritual renewal. We remind ourselves of those horrific events from the arrest of Jesus, to his crucifixion; but we also remember, the joy of his resurrection, that confirmed his promise of the life to come.

Anglican Churches hold special Lenten Services in remembrance of these important events. The current lockdown has made it impossible to follow the usual format, however it doesn't prevent us from making our own personal journeys. St James can't open for congregational services, but private prayer can be arranged. St James continues to hold a service each Sunday morning at 10.30, unfortunately no congregation is permitted, but the service can be accessed and viewed quite easily from the St James website.

Here are some ideas for those who would like to carry out personal devotions in their own homes;

Reading and Prayer. Find a quiet place to read the Bible. If you don't know the recommended daily readings for Lent, it may be easier to read from a Gospel of your choice starting with the ministry of Jesus. Follow this through each day, continuing to the time of his crucifixion. After each day's reading take a little time for quiet reflection and prayer.

Fasting. This has been a long-standing Christian tradition during Lent. It is also an appreciation of those 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness, resisting the temptations. Fasting is less strict now than it was in the past and is sometimes limited to just two days: 'Ash Wednesday' and 'Good Friday' (on Feb 17th and April 2nd respectively in 2021). Conventional fasting involved total abstinence from all solid food. This became unacceptable when it led to ill–health. Giving up treats or luxury items is sometimes used as a suitable alternative. **Serena Josolyne – Reader**

Lent - music for the soul

Lent is my favourite season of the church's year. It was the first such season that I experienced upon joining the choir in early 1965 and I immediately felt an affinity to the haunting music of Lent - with the possible exception of following Fr Butcher around the church singing the (exceedingly long) Litany in a processional figure of eight when the sung response of "Good Lord, deliver us" took on an unintended meaning for me!

To me the music of Lent touches the soul in a way that no other season does. To sing the psalms at Evensong is always an highlight of the week but particularly so during Lent when there seems to be an added poignancy. However, it is the Lent anthems from the Church Anthem Book learnt as a young chorister that first drew me into church music and will always remain with me as particular favourites. I could list so many but here are just a few: God so loved the world - John Goss

Is it nothing to you? - Frederick Arthur Gore Ouseley Let thy merciful ears - Thomas Weelkes (attributed Mudd)

O Saviour of the world - both the John Goss version and the one by Giovanni Perluigi Sante da Palestrina

Like the Lent anthems, there are so many Lent hymns to love (particularly those relating to Passiontide). The words are truly wonderful and reach right into the soul. I offer below a verse from each of three hymns by way of examples:

From "When I survey the wondrous Cross":
"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

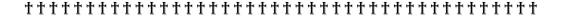
From "My God, I love thee":
"E'en so I love thee, and will love,
And in thy praise will sing,
Solely because thou art my God,
And my eternal King."

Finally, and I think most apposite to a time when we can all sing together again in safety, from my favourite Lent hymn "Glory be to Jesus": "Lift ye then your voices, Swell the mighty flood; Louder still and louder Praise the precious Blood."

Amen to that.

Trevor Deadman

Elspeth and Chris Coke



What does Lent mean to me?

As we approach the season of Lent, we have been asked to share a few thoughts on what is significant for us. First of all, it can seem a challenging season in the Christian year, with its emphasis on penance, perseverance and preparation.

But it also invites us to ask questions of ourselves, and to delve more deeply into our faith. It offers an opportunity to review our lives, perhaps to discard bad attitudes and practices, and to reflect on our priorities. This may involve "giving something up", but it could also lead us to consider any changes we might need to make, eg what new tasks or responsibilities we should take on. Should we seek a deeper understanding of our faith, and what can help us to do this?

In past years we have come to appreciate the Ash Wednesday collect, which highlights the need for forgiveness, especially the line "Create and make in us new and contrite hearts". I believe we can use this throughout Lent as a means of turning away from the past and looking ahead, knowing that we are forgiven.

And when we come through the period of Lent, and reach Holy Week, are we ready for what we find on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday? Are we able to use this time effectively to prepare for the high point of the Christian year, the death and resurrection of Christ?

This year in particular, when we are not free to meet to share or discuss in small Lent groups, we have the opportunity of quiet personal reflection, which is in itself a gift from God.

††††	†††	†††	††††	††††	††††	† † † †	† † †	†††	†† †	ተተተ	††	ተተ

Moses

Moses was transformed by 40 days on Mount Sinai.

Moses obeys God and because he obeys – he gets to come up higher and nearer to God. Obedience brings closeness and intimacy with God – which results in God giving Moses two stones tablets – the ten commandments so others can obey – so that others might rise higher and draw closer too.

"Come up the mountain......and stay a while."

Obedience requires we stay a while – we stand – we wait – we don't rush - we continue to do the right thing until we are told to do something else – often we are required to stay beyond what is comfortable or easy or convenient.

In this pandemic we have had to do a lot of staying – and it has not been easy. But my prayer throughout has been "draw us closer God" – for that is the essence of Covenant – love that commits and goes beyond what is easy – love that stays awhile.

Those whom Moses left behind didn't understand: and when we are obeying God, getting closer to him, often those left behind will not wait patiently, will not understand either.

The Israelites left behind did not obey God, and in the absence of obedience (and therefore closeness) comes separation and idol worship – turning to what we can touch and see to bring comfort – whether that is an affair, food, drink or drugs or a golden calf. But when we disobey it makes us fools, the comfort is fleeting, temporary and often full of regret.

Only obedience to God can bring us us closer.

In what ways is God calling you to obey to him? In what ways is he asking you to "stay awhile" with him?

Mthr Katie

A Poem for Lent

I love the poems of John Donne, whose life spanned part of the 16th and 17th Centuries. He had a colourful life. A man of many love affairs John Donne lost his job and was briefly in prison after he eloped to marry the boss's niece. He was famous for his passionate love poetry as well as for his religious poems. Towards the end of his life, he was Dean of St Paul's. The poem below puns on his own name. It is poem of repentance and faith.

A Hymn to God the Father

BY JOHN DONNE

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, thou hast done;
I fear no more.

John Donne

٨	1;	~	~ r	, I) w	er	'n	_	n
А	П	SI)[1 F	31	er	H	А	n

A Lent Reflection

Alison Brennan

During Lent we are asked as Christians to focus on prayer, fasting and reflection, also on charitable giving. Remembering Jesus as he fasted and prayed for forty days in the wilderness in preparation for his coming ordeal on the Cross.

Most Christians aren't asked to make the supreme sacrifice that Jesus made dying on the Cross. I picture the terrified young man in the Gethsemane Garden, sweating blood and praying "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." And the loneliness he must have felt as his friends slept unaware.

People of all faiths and none have made and are making huge sacrifices during the pandemic. I write this the day after the UK recorded 100,000 deaths from Coronavirus and many more people bereaved and grieving. Not to mention all the other challenges and constraints, including children not able to be at school, jobs lost or insecure, food poverty.

I find my faith deeply challenged by this, but I do believe God is alongside us in pain and suffering.

I believe the way through is prayer, and trust as Jesus urged his disciples to pray in the Gethsamane Garden and as he prayed himself, in terror, faith and submission to the will of God, leading to the ultimate sacrifice for our eternal good.

Prayer doesn't always fix things in the way we'd like, but it opens things up in us and we may in time notice subtle changes in and around us, a shifting of the landscape, light in a dark place.

Mothering Sunday

The fourth Sunday of Lent, Mothering Sunday, recognises the importance of "families" coming together. It recognises the importance in our lives of those who have cared for us. Possibly linked to ancient Spring festivals for "mother" goddesses, we know that by the sixteenth century during Lent, there was a day when the people simply returned to their "mother" church. Later those in

service and apprentices went home to their mothers with gifts such as flowers. This bringing of families together may be why the day is also known as Refreshment Sunday, a day when the fasting rules for Lent are relaxed. By the early 20th Century recognition of this "special Sunday had waned but interest in it was renewed by the American idea of "Mothers Day". In contrast to the overt commercialisation of Mothers Day, the Mothers Union has always been an enthusiastic supporter of Mothering Sunday, recognising "carers" of all kinds as well as the many ways the church supports the nurturing of family life and faith.

Today Mothering Sunday services recognise the diversity of family relationships and the range of emotions the day evokes. We celebrate but also we remember loss and painful times. For us, as people of faith, it is a time to reflect and give thanks. A special service such as we have at St. James is a good occasion to invite visitors to mark and share the day with the family of the church.

In a few months it will be forty years since the Mothers Union branch here at St. James opened. Lent has been, from the beginning an important part of our church year. Close to the beginning of Lent we celebrate National Marriage Week. In March is Women's Day of Prayer, and later in the month, Lady Day, the Feast of the Annunciation with Deanery wide services. Mothering Sunday is followed in two weeks by Easter, all reflecting the many opportunities in Lent for study and renewal of our faith.

This day, Mothering Sunday is certainly one of these.

Diana Schuldt

Easter Word Search ERCEDS ASLRURP CSASATK NESCIBL EPDWORNB OOSLSOEF INEHYKRIEKAUQHTRAE JF KZOUKHJRCY DROBEQBIJIOSIDOYUVXXCLZSEVEIHT ETHREEDAYSSI CLKFIHOVIEJCFAGWAN APOSTLESSDE E OUL GNO XIFICURCNU TNJTNYQVYCPVRTICROWNOFTHORNSTV HIGHPRIESTHERF V G J U D A S I S C A R I O T I RUVBCYLU RSKPSTPC BETRAYAL QRTQOSEF ANGELS MARY **APOSTLES** NAILS BETRAYAL **PASSOVER** NBMI PIECES OF SILVER BLOOD VOOB IBYG CALVARY PIERCED CROSS PILATE QDRTGVFT

BETRAYAL
BLOOD
CALVARY
CROSS
CROWN OF THORNS
CRUCIFIXION
DARKNESS
DEATH
EARTHQUAKE
EASTER
GOLGOTHA
HIGH PRIEST
JESUS CHRIST
JOSEPH
JUDAS ISCARIOT
KING
LAMB

PASSOVER
PIECES OF SILVER
PIERCED
PILATE
RESURRECTION
ROBE
ROMANS
SACRIFICE
SIMON OF CYRENE
SOLDIERS
SON OF GOD
SPEAR
STONE
TEMPLE
THIEVES
THREE DAYS
TOMB



Easter Traditions in Britain

From cheese rolling to welly throwing, some strange, bizarre and eccentric traditions, many dating back centuries, are still taking place around Britain today. Easter is one of those dates in the calendar that is often marked by examples of these in towns and villages up and down the country.

These are just a few examples, which you may or may not have heard of

Bottle Kicking, Leicestershire

Bottle-kicking is an old Leicestershire custom that takes place in the village of Hallaton each Easter Monday. Records of bottle-kicking date to the late 18th century, but the custom is thought to originate much earlier, from before the



Christian era. Each team kicks a bottle towards its village, hoping to cross the far stream before their rivals, and win the barrel of beer for themselves.

Apparently, while the gouging of eyes is forbidden, practically every other dirty fighting trick is allowed, and broken bones are a regular occurrence.

The Nutters Dance, Lancashire

The Britannia Coco-nut Dancers or Nutters are a troupe of Lancastrian clog dancers who perform every Easter in Bacup, dancing 7 miles (11 km) across the town and surrounding areas. The men of Bacup have been blacking up, pulling on skirts and strapping bells to their legs since 1857. This odd parade is led by a whip-wielding man called the "Whiffler" or "Whipper-In", and takes place every Easter Saturday. Its purpose is to drive out evil spirits - and the blackface is meant to protect the dancers from demons.

Simnel Cake

Simnel cake has been eaten since medieval times as both a rich, sweet treat and a symbolic ritual. The fruit cake is topped with eleven marzipan balls to represent the eleven apostles of Christ, minus Judas. Simnel cake is a light fruitcake that is an Easter classic and is often associated with Mother's Day. Traditionally, since at least Medieval times it was eaten on Simnel Sunday Mid-Lent Sunday; the fourth Sunday of Lent, exactly three weeks before Easter Sunday, when the fast is broken.



Egg Jarping, North East England

Egg jarping is a traditional Easter game. In English folk traditions, the game has variously been known as "shackling", "jarping" or "dumping"

The rule of the game is simple. One holds a hard-boiled egg and taps the egg of another participant with one's



own egg intending to break the other's, without breaking one's own. As with any other game, it has been a subject of cheating; eggs with cement, alabaster and even marble cores have been reported.

The egg was a symbol of rebirth, adopted by early Christians as a symbol of the resurrection of Jesus at Easter.

Egg Rolling, Lancashire

Dating back hundreds of years, the tradition of egg rolling as we know it in this country has always taken place around Easter and has always been all about children having fun – first by decorating hard-boiled eggs and then by rolling them down a grassy hill to see whose will go the furthest and survive with the least amount of cracks. And though nowadays most of the decorated eggs are painted or even foil-wrapped chocolate eggs, in days gone by, real eggs were wrapped in onion skins then boiled to give their shells an attractive marbled appearance. These eggs, known as pace eggs, were named after the Latin "Pacha" which means Easter, and were traditionally eaten on Easter Sunday.



Easter Parades, Nationwide

Have you ever wondered where the practice for wearing an Easter bonnet originated?

According to Christian tradition, the fashion for new bonnets came thanks to Easter being known as a time for renewal.

With the fasting of Lent over and people keen to mark the religious occasion, female churchgoers were eager to make and show off their new clothes, including hats.



So this started the tradition of wearing Easter bonnets.

In the UK nowadays, many children build and decorate colourful paper bonnets at school before Easter, then join a local parade through their town or village on Easter Monday to show them off. New clothes at Easter are traditionally considered to be good luck.

Morris Dancing, Nationwide

In many villages across Britain, Morris Dancing is a traditional part of Easter celebrations.

No one know for certain the origins of Morris Dancing. It is though it may have its roots in rites celebrating fertility and the coming of Spring. Dancers would blacken their faces with soot so they would not be recognised by the local priest, and would resemble "Moors". This gave rise to "Moorish Men" or "Moorish dauncers" and hence to Morris.

Surprisingly, over time the dances were assimilated by the established church, and by the 1500s Morris was being performed for Easter, Whitsuntide and saint's days. Morris dancing became so much an accepted part of these festivals that churchwarden's accounts showed, in medieval times, that accessories were provided by parish funds—St Lawrence Church Reading, accounts show Morris dancers were given 3d for ale by the parish - a practice which may cause some raised eyebrows at the PCC nowadays!

Jack in the Green, nationwide

The Jack in the Green is a foliage-covered man who leads a troupe of Morris dancers through towns and villages on May day and at Easter. The tradition, which exists across northern Europe in various forms, was considered "bawdy" in Victorian times and died out, but has been revived in many towns in the last 40 years.

Maundy Money, nationwide

Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter, Christians remember as the day of the Last Supper, when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and established the ceremony known as Eucharist. The word Maundy comes from the French "Mande" meaning "command" or "mandate" and is taken from the command given by Christ at the Last Supper, "love one another as I have loved you." In Britain, the Queen takes part in the ceremony of the Royal Maundy, which

dates back to Edward I. This involves the distribution of Maundy Money to deserving senior citizens (one man and one woman for each year of the sovereign's age), usually chosen for having done service to their community. They receive ceremonial red and white purses which contain coins made especially for the occasion. The white purse contains one coin for each year of the



monarch's reign. The red purse money in place of other gifts that used to be given to the poor.

In the 17th century, and earlier, the King or Queen would wash the feet of the selected poor as a gesture of humility, and in remembrance of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. Needless to say this doesn't happen anymore and records show the last monarch to do this was James II.

In 2013, there was a break with tradition and the Queen handed out the Maundy Money in York, and the Pope, instead of the usual foot-washing ceremony, normally performed on lay people in one of Rome's basilicas, actually washed the feet of 12 prisoners in a youth detention centre near Rome.



Hot Cross Buns, nationwide

As well as people across the UK eating Hot Cross Buns on Good Friday there are a few specific traditions that involve the Hot Cross Bun.

Every year at the church of St Bartholmew -the -Great, in Smithfield, London, there is a service, which dates back hundreds of years were 21 widows are given money and Hot Cross Buns after the church service.

There is also an Easter Bun ceremony in a London pub in Bromley-by-Bow. Each sailor adds a bun to the many that hang in commemoration of a poor widow who baked a bun for her only son who never returned from sea.

Pancake Races, nationwide

Pancake races, where participants run while flipping cakes, are held in towns across the UK on Shrove Tuesday (Mardi Gras). Apparently the tradition originated when a housewife from Olney in Buckinghamshire was so late for church that she ran up the street while still carrying her frying pan.



Orange Rolling, Bedfordshire



The residents of Dunstable have been rolling oranges down the steep slopes of Pascombe Pit every Good Friday for some years now. Usually the activity is serenaded by a Punch and Judy show, Salvation Army band and a gang of "pelters" who throw fruit at the competitors.

Hare Pie Scramble, Leicestershire

Another tradition from the villages of Hallaton and Medbourne that harks back to the Easter gift of hare pie and beer.

It begins with the "Warrener" and his hare-topped staff leading a procession of villagers carrying the hare pie and bread



through Hallaton. The pie is then blessed at the church and thrown among the crowd, which triggers a mass scramble for bits of pie. Again, injuries are common.

Planting Parsley, nationwide

According to ancient tradition, it's considered good luck for women to plant parsley on Good Friday. The folk belief that parsley travels to hell and back seven times before germinating is said to date back to Roman times. Another tradition claims that a good bed of parsley predicts a family of daughters.



Rev Iain Mckillop has kindly written Lent Daily Meditations for the church. We have included his pieces for Good Friday and Easter Sunday; but if anyone would like a full copy either posted or emailed please let us know

46/ Good Friday – FORGIVENESS – Mtt.6:12; 18:35; Lk.17:3 **Rev Iain Mckillop** "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." [Lk.23:34]

As I discussed in Meditation 43, the idea of Christ's death as 'sacrifice' has permeated Christianity since early days, though some modern theologians are understandably uncomfortable with the interpretation that a loving God could deliberately sacrifice his perfect Son, even for the great good of cleansing humanity and reuniting us with God. Yet somehow, through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, forgiveness was achieved for human beings, which made possible the promise of a new and better life in response to God. The father of the Prodigal Son forgave without the need for sacrifice; he forgave because he loved. 'Hesed', the Hebrew word for God's 'covenant love', 'loving-kindness' and 'mercy' recognises that God's nature is love, and the will for forgiveness is part of the loving character of the divine.

Forgiveness 'áphesis' in Greek can means 'freedom' / 'letting someone out of prison' / 'setting free' / 'releasing from a debt, taxation or an office' / 'hurling away' / 'pardoning' / 'leaving behind the past'. Another linked term 'páresis' is used more exclusively of the forgiveness given by God or Christ. This form of forgiveness is of course more perfect than the forgiveness that human beings are able to give.

Some people talk of perfect love, like that of God, being 'unconditional' but that is not exactly what scripture implies. It sometimes seems that Christians use the term as a form of protection from feeling guilt at letting God down. 'God loves me/you unconditionally' can sometimes be used to excuse sin, rather than recognising our need to sincerely repent. There is no excuse for not repenting, or for making reparation for our sins. We understand that a parent has an element of unconditional love for their children, but that does not stop parents recognising their wrongs, wishing that their family would behave better, and doing all they can to bring about the refreshment that can come from true penitence. Love is part of God's nature and character but God's s love is described as having certain expectations, as does the love of any parent or between partners. The covenants were based on parties making and keeping promises to one another. God provides covenant love and care,

but his people are expected to keep to our covenant promises to follow God's ways, strive for righteousness and relate to God in spirit and in truth. I am not sure if there truly is anything totally 'unconditional' in God's love and forgiveness. 'Unconditional love' is not a phrase to be found anywhere in scripture. But God's love for everything is so perfect that it surely could never allow any imperfect aspect in his forgiveness.

Jesus' gift of his life was the perfect offering of 'hesed' or 'agapé'-love. "Greater love has no-one than this, to give up one's life for one's friends" [Jn.15:13]. Jesus' self-offering, in some complex way through his death, was the ultimate offering of love and the assurance of forgiveness. We should not take forgiveness for granted. It may be a characteristic of God's love but the message of Good Friday is that our way to forgiveness was painfully and self-sacrificially achieved somehow through Jesus' self-giving.

Forgiveness can do many things. The root meaning of the verb 'aphiēmi' / 'to forgive' is to 'send out' or 'send away'. This led to the meaning: 'to remit, forgive and completely cancel debts' [Matt.6:12; 18:27, 32]. It also meant removal of sins [Matt.9:2, 5, 6, 12:31-2] and remission of any punishment or penalty due to sinful behaviour. Forgiveness releases people, brings about cleansing and gives freedom. There is little that feels as clean and freeing as being forgiven something important. It restores a relationship between people, and can turn enmity towards love.

God's love and purity of justice encourages us not to seek revenge [Lev.19:18; Prov.24:29; Rom.12:14, 17-21; 1Thes.5:15; 1Pett.2:23]. Jesus was forgiving. Religious and secular powers were not so forgiving of the truths he was telling; they were intent on self-preservation rather than truth and religious integrity. The Sadducees, Pharisees, Scribes and Roman rulers were afraid of Jesus' preaching spiritual truth to the people. The priest Nicodemus appears to have converted to Jesus' way. But following Jesus would have meant amending many of the authorities' practices, which gave them, power, position, finance, dominance and control in society. As far as Caiaphas was concerned, it was "better that ne man should die for the good of the people than to have the whole nation destroyed" [Jn.11:50; 18:14]. Probably he was even more intent that their institution should not be disrupted. Similarly, those who cover over abuse today pretend that the cover-up "is for the good of the Church / institution" etc. But a nation, a church, a political party or any institution that is built on lies, false prophecies or unwillingness to ask for forgiveness of sins can never flourish as God intended true Kingdom. Christ came 'for the good of God's people': his birth was "good news of great joy for all people" [Lk.2:10].

Yet he brought about the joy of true and eternal life through intense personal suffering.

Jesus' forgiveness at the point of death is the great example to us to try to emulate the love and forgiveness of God. Jesus taught us to 'forgive as you have been forgiven' [Matt.6:12-15; Lk.6:37]. He taught his disciples that if they forgave the sins of any they would be forgiven [Jn.20:23]. In the 'Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, the steward, having been personally forgiven by the master, failed to forgive those who had debts towards him. Jesus said that when we come to worship or pray, we must first make sure that we have forgiven our neighbour [Mk.11:25]. "If you forgive others your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you" [Matt.6:14-15]. However, the act of forgiving is often terribly difficult, often appearing impossible.

I am not sure that it is possible for human beings to forgive in the same ways that God forgives, certainly not as completely as God can do. Nevertheless Jesus encouraged us to "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" [Matt.5:48]. I must admit that there have been five people in my personal history that I have found myself unable to forgive. Each of these was a leading member of their church, each was deliberately duplicitous and knew what they were doing, each badly damaged my health, my future and my psychology. I was far from being the only one who suffered through their abuse of their ministries. The ability to forgive in many such situations feels inconceivable. So Jesus' forgiveness of his persecutors from the Cross: "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing" [Jn.23:34] went way beyond natural human feelings. I wonder if we will ever be able to forgive as God can do. Psychological damage creates mental or situational prisons which grown around people. But that does not mean that we should not try to learn to forgive in the best ways we can, because forgiveness is able to free the one who has been damaged, as well as freeing the abuser.

Our forgiveness should not necessarily be like that of God. We believe that when God forgives our sins are forgotten. But for us remembering people's duplicity can be a protection mechanism. We recognise that the people who have damaged us should not necessarily be trusted. Remembering can strengthen us not to be so easily taken in in the future. While the act of forgiving is important in reuniting and repairing relationships, remembering the sin can strengthen us and make us wiser for the future. It helps us to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves" [Matt.10:16]

Although we believe Jesus to have been the perfect man, I feel certain that even the loving Jesus did not simply easily forgive. If he was like us in most ways, forgiveness may have been an inner struggle. It must have taken strength of will to forgive those who were persecuting and crucifying him. His prayer in Gethsemane was certainly a struggle, which caused Haematidrosis or haematohidrosis, the sweating of blood. While he asked "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing", they did know in part what they were doing, despite not necessarily knowing the eternal implications of their actions. If someone has knowingly done damage yet refuses to admit or acknowledge their guilt, and continues in their duplicity or abusive behaviour they are culpable. It would be valuable to know how Jesus or St. Paul would guide us to deal with such abuse. Today psychologists might advise the abused to try to 'park' the situation, leave it for time to heal, in order to be able to move on to other and positive aspects of our lives to try to alleviate the damage. As Christ's teaching is so much based on truth, I presume that he would give similar advice. It is difficult to love and forgive another when they so obviously do not love us. 'Parking' the situation may help give time and space in which we might develop some understanding of the abuser and help us to develop general love towards flawed human beings. This might be the closest we can get to being able to emulate the love and forgiveness of Christ in such a situation. We are encouraged to 'love our neighbour', but perhaps loving someone who has behaved in evil ways is as hard for God as it is for us.

Nevertheless, somehow, amid the horrors of his Passion, Jesus was able to forgive in ways that are so much deeper and more all-encompassing than our abilities to emulate him. God's forgiveness is a key to all that occurred on the Cross. We do not know how the death of Jesus Christ achieved salvation; it is a mystery hidden in the eternity and truth of God. But somehow we believe that the process of forgiving, cleansing, saving and renewing came about through Jesus. It seems impossible for us to be able to forgive those who do not deserve forgiveness. That is why it is completely wrong for any of us to regard the process of salvation simplistically. But somehow through the Cross we believe that God forgave and saved us for all time.

Good Friday is a day to 'park' our desire to understand what was happening spiritually upon the Cross to atone for sin, forgive and release us. Meditation may seek to unravel our thoughts and attempts to reach towards aspects of comprehension of such a mystery. Contemplation by contrast 'parks' any frustrations and struggles in understanding and rests in the belief that truth exists somewhere in these mysterious unfathomable actions. Believing that there is truth within the process of salvation leads us to feel free, released, forgiven, clean and able to face life in ways that lead to abundance. We call

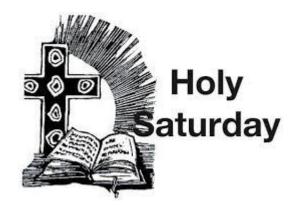
this Friday 'good' because amid the impossibilities of understanding what was happening spiritually through the Cross and Christ's self-giving, we are assured that salvation has come to us.

For Contemplation and Prayer:

How easy do you find it to forgive? How does Jesus' example of forgiveness speak into your life and situation?

EASTER SATURDAY

Our Lord has been crucified, his body is in the tomb and well......let us think today of the disciples. What must they have gone through and been thinking. We know the result but we can still share the agony and heartache that they had. The man they had followed for the length of



His ministry, the healings, the teachings and just his company has changed them completely. They had endured the arrest and trial and finally the crucifixion and they were in tears, perplexed, wondering how what they had learnt would move forward, scared, in pain and in some cases regretful with a probable feeling of guilt and now they had lost their Master and Teacher. As life progresses, I can understand all their feelings and especially the one about how things will develop or even if they will and of course my own guilt. In this year perhaps more than most we can all sense those feelings for we have all lost something which causes us heartache and pain but it is only through our sure knowledge of the Risen Christ that we at least have something they did not. We can allow that knowledge to do two things on this day......understand their feelings and our own but to realise that our knowledge will give us the strength to come to Easter morning with a new burst of the power of our inner faith. Of course Good Friday and Easter Sunday are the two days most people think of but I believe that Easter Saturday gives us a period of coming to terms with what is normal in humans....all the feelings and doubts that I have mentioned.....but because we know what happened it will, this year, give us the strength to welcome Easter morning in a completely new way. History can teach us a lot and that night following the crucifixion must have been 'Hell' for the disciples and they suffered but the following day

brought the beginnings of a new understanding-one that took time, patience, effort and faith. Perhaps this year we understand all that a little more as a new

time dawns. Let Easter Saturday be a period of trial into how we understand our faith just as they had to.

May we all experience the first and celebrate the second and I wish you all a Spiritual renewal this Easter Day 2021. God Bless you.

Fr.Cii	ve											
	††††	† † † † † †	ተተተተ	††† †	'†††'	ተተተተ	+++	t	· † † † †	†† †	†† †	ተተ

48/ EASTER SUNDAY - SALVATION - Rev Iain Mckillop

"...we have heard for ourselves and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world." [Jn.4:42]. – Phil.3:10.

Jesus' claim: "I am the resurrection and the life" [Jn.11:25; Rom.6:5] was probably not just talking about his own resurrection. We've no idea how broadly the power of his resurrection extends; that is another of the expansive mysteries of faith. I will write about how theologians interpret 'Resurrection' in the series of meditations that I am preparing for the period from Easter to Pentecost. But from earliest times in the Church, Jesus' return to life on Easter morning was regarded as evidence that in 'salvation' he was offering an enormous gift to those who believed in and followed him. This would be something to be enjoyed both in the present and the future. The earliest Christians also regarded the Resurrection as evidence that vindicated all the truths of Jesus teaching and identified him as 'Christ', the 'Messiah', the anointed one who had come from God to achieve 'salvation'.

'Salvation is therefore at the heart of our belief about what Jesus Christ achieved. In the Church we so often call him 'Saviour' and use the word 'salvation', but it is another word that we do not often use with a full recognition of its meaning.

In English 'save' can have many connotations, and similarly there are two main words for 'to save' in the New Testament and three in the Hebrew Scriptures. $Rrh\acute{y}omai$ is mostly used to translate the Hebrew term n, meaning 'to protect', 'to guard', 'to deliver', 'to ward off', and to preserve'. It is less commonly used in the New Testament than $s\acute{o}z\acute{o}$, which more often translates the Hebrew words: y's' meaning 'to save', to 'help', to 'free' It also used to translate g'l meaning 'to release', 'to buy back', 'to free', 'to redeem', 'to keep'

and *mlţ* - 'to save', 'to escape', 'to achieve safety'. In Classic Greek *rhýomai* was used of 'protection by the gods, leaders, guards, priests or others'. *Sốzó* was used with a huge variety of meanings 'rescue or preservation from death, destruction, battle, and the perils of life or evil', 'keeping alive', 'being pardoned', 'protected', 'kept from want', 'safe return', 'keeping a flame alive', 'preserving a memory' or 'something that is treasured'. It was also used of 'wellbeing', 'benefitting', 'keeping good health', 'preserving ones inner being or nature', 'the preservation of the inner health of humanity'. So when the Hebrew Scriptures speak of God 'saving' and the New Testament speaks of being 'saved by Christ', salvation is a far more expansive term than just protection by God in this life and being offered life beyond death.

Both the Greek words *rhýomai* and *sózó* are used with broad intentions throughout scripture. The blessing of 'salvation', as described in the Bible, is a hugely expansive gift. *Sózó* has a connotation of 'to be roomy', implying the spaciousness of God's care, deliverance, grace and mercy towards us. It includes God's care for the entire cosmos and the spaciousness of what God is leading followers towards. In the Hebrew Scriptures God promised to lead his people into a 'spacious place' [Ex.3:8; Judg.18:10; 2 Sam.22:20; I Chron.4:40; Ps.18:19; 31:8]. The 'spacious place' is interpreted in the New Testament as the enormity of God's truth. Jesus promised his followers 'in my Father's house there are many rooms / mansions' [Jn.14:2]. In the Hebrew Scriptures salvation is a result of God's broad-spreading mercy [Neh.9:8]; it is part of his nature, not a magical gift. 'Deliverer' [Isa.63:16] is a name of God, as 'Saviour' was used of Jesus [Jn.4:42]. So 'salvation' and 'deliverance' are linked and are also broad and inclusive states to enjoy as gifts.

How we interpret 'being saved' and 'salvation' in scripture often depends on context. Sometimes it means human deliverance [1Sam.11:3] or bringing justice. It is often used to indicate divine help in precarious situations or victory in battle [Zeph.3:17]. In similar variations of meaning, the way that God 'saves us' depends on the context in which we find ourselves.

As the Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish religion developed, ideas about what happens to people after death adapted and changed. In early Hebrew theology there seems to have been little concept of life beyond death. The grave and the disintegration of the body were believed to be our end. At that time God's salvation was interpreted to mean protection in personal and national life and preservation from death in battle, accidents and disease. Gradually as belief in an afterlife expanded, first ideas of 'sheol' as a place of rest for the dead developed. Then belief expanded further to consider that that there could be rewards for righteous life beyond death. This expansion

and the emphasis on rewards for the dead became stronger in the intertestamental period, particularly after the death of heroes in the Maccabean Revolt. The changing and varied understandings of the meaning of 'salvation' expanded to include rescue from death and the promise of gifts in a life beyond. How could life just stop for people who had defended God's ways; surely there must be rewards for righteousness in life beyond death? Several Hebrew Apocryphal books reflect these changes. In 4 Esdras those who are saved are judged by their works and evil is eliminated. In the Ethiopian Enoch God fulfils all the prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures and frees people and the world from sin. Arguments about existence and rewards beyond death divided the Sadducees and Pharisees: the former did not accept the idea of life beyond death, since they could not find it in their canonical scriptures. The Pharisees accepted that there would be some form of existence and rewards after people die. (Jesus was able to wisely goad the two factions in his disputes over the issue, when they tried to trick him with questions [Matt.22:23-45; Mk.12:18-28; Lk.20:27].

In the New Testament salvation includes rescue from extreme danger [Matt.8:25; Mk.15:30; Jn.12:27]. Faith is described as saving people in terms of saving the *whole* person, not just healing physical symptoms [Lk.7:50]. John the Baptist proclaimed 'the remission of sins' as part of the 'knowledge of salvation' [Lk.1:77], which was in line with the concept of salvation in Hebrew Scriptures. But he also pointed forward to the coming of a Saviour who would redeem in a more eternal way [Matt.1:21]. Mk.8:35 talks of the saving and losing of life in terms both of the present and of eternity. Lk.13:23 links salvation with entering God's Kingdom. Lk.19:10 makes it clear that salvation is not just looking forward to a future beyond death but finding salvation and being part of the Kingdom in our present lives.

St. Paul took this expansion of the meaning of salvation still further. With his pharisaic training and knowledge of Jewish scripture and tradition he expanded the concept of salvation to include 'being proclaimed just and reconciliation with God' [1Cor.2:15; 5:5; Rom.13:11], 'rescue from judgement' [Rom.5:9; 1Cor.3:15], 'the gift of eternal life', 'redemption and glorification of our bodies' [Rom.8:24; Phil.3:20-21]; 'spiritual gifts in our present life to make us effective parts of Christ's body', and 'our gradual transformation in righteousness into the image of God's Son. [Rom.8:20; Gal.5:5]. In Rom.8:24 Paul assured his readers that when we received Christ's gospel we have already received salvation. This is echoed by the writer of Ephesians who speaks of us being saved by the message of salvation [Eph.1:13], but though we have been saved, the consummation of salvation is still to come in the future [Eph.2:5-7]. Salvation, therefore, like Christ's Kingdom, has past,

present and future dimensions. Salvation may also not just relate to human beings; some scriptures imply that the created 'cosmos' or 'world' will be transformed as part of Christ's saving act [Rom. 8:21; Jn.3:17; 12:47; Rev.21:1].

As the one who brings this about at his Father's will, Christ is called 'Saviour' /. In the ancient world this had the connotation of a 'rescuer', 'deliverer from perils', 'protector', 'preserver of life', 'physician', 'helper'. In the Hellenistic world and among Egyptian and Seleucid rulers who ruled Palestine prior to the Romans, as well as later Roman Emperors, sótér was also used as a royal title, and implied that the ruler was the son of the deity. We have no proof that this divine meaning was understood or implied when the term was used of Jesus, but it is interesting in relation to later development of understanding of his divine nature. 'Sótér' was used in the Greek translation of Hebrew Scriptures to describe God as Israel's Saviour and 'helper' as well being a title given to God's human helpers - heroes, kings, occasionally used of judges. In Isa.49:6 and Zech.9:9 the Messiah was called sótér. God is called Saviour in Lk.1:47, and his coming Son, the Messiah, is given the title 'Saviour' in Lk.2:11, a position Jesus acknowledged in Jn.4:24. In taking his message to the Samaritans and others who were not Jews, Jesus was demonstrating that he was Saviour for Gentiles as well as the Jews: The Samaritan town of the Woman at the well acknowledged: "...we have heard for ourselves and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world." [Jn.4:42].

In offering and achieving salvation for us Jesus, was expanding the understanding of the meaning of 'salvation' still further. He was not just offering forgiveness of sins and eternal life: He would bring those who he had redeemed and saved into 'a spacious place' – the Kingdom of God both in the present and future. This includes the expansive meaning of what Jesus was doing in saving, as discussed in paragraphs 3 and 4 above. Cynics sometimes accuse Christians of narrowness of belief, or of placing trust in 'pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die. But with Christ's message of 'salvation' we are offering to the world a huge gift from God to expand and consummate life now and in the future. How Jesus' death and resurrection actually achieved this remains 'mystery' within the process of God's activity. But the inner spiritual life of the believer is lit by a spark that recognises it to be true.

We believe that we have salvation, though the grace, mercy and love of God. Jesus' resurrection has been thought to be evidence that life exists beyond death, and through Christ we are being called to share this spiritual dimension. We don't need to wait until we die to discover the benefits of salvation. In living abundant Christian lives, we are able, in the present, to begin to enjoy

the benefits of salvation which Christ achieved. Easter is a day to really celebrate and freely enjoy this release to freedom:

Christian art sometimes uses the soaring eagle as a symbol of resurrection. Mediaeval Christian bestiary legends symbolised Christ as the eagle flying high (Christ's place in heaven). Being so close to the sun (God) he would scorch his wings and plummet to earth (the Incarnation). He would land in the ocean and drown (Jesus' death). Sometimes he is imagined as a sea-eagle, plummeting to catch a fish (the destruction of sin in the Harrowing of Hell). Then being divine he would rise again and soar higher and higher to regain his position as king of the heavens. That of course is all legendary, but the imagery vividly captures our belief that Christ returned to his Father's place in heaven and achieved the salvation by which we too can live abundantly in him:

"Even youths shall faint and grow weary, and the young shall fall exhausted, but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." [Isa.40:30-31]

For Contemplation and Prayer:

At this Eastertime consider the expansiveness of what Jesus has achieved for you. What does the Easter promise of 'salvation' mean in terms of your life?

