

NEW BEGINNINGS – A JOURNEY FROM LENT TO EASTER

For the past few years I've produced a Lent reflection leaflet continuing a format started by my colleague Bryan Halson during our time together on the former Shrewsbury Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission. Bryan died just before Christmas 2021. He will be remembered fondly by those in Shrewsbury diocese and beyond. For Advent 2020 I put together a series of weekly reflections based on the writings of my elder daughter Annie, a scripture scholar, teacher and evangelist who died of natural causes in June 2020. For Lent 2021 I shared some more of her material for the journey from Lent to Easter. This year I'm using Annie's words once again as many readers have said they found them helpful.

Lent is an opportunity to prepare, to take time out and quieten ourselves, to listen to God, to examine our lives and reassess our priorities. This is a chance to focus on what really matters and to journey in faith, hope and love.

NOTE: The Scripture verses are from each day's readings using the 2022 St Paul Liturgical Calendar, the reflections from Annie's writings.

ASH WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2

Be reconciled to God ... now is the favourable time. 2 Cor 5:20 – 6:2
"The journey with the Lord is a journey into love."

THURSDAY, MARCH 3

Anyone who loses his life for my sake will save it. Lk 9:22-25
"You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you."

FRIDAY, MARCH 4

Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me: to break unjust fetters ... to let the oppressed go free. Is 58: 1-9
"We can bring release to captives by offering a place of welcome to the lonely and the marginalised."

SATURDAY, MARCH 5

Show me, Lord, your way so that I may walk in your truth.
Ps 85: 1-6
"Lord, may your spirit reveal to me the right path and give me the strength, consolation and determination to walk it."

SUNDAY, MARCH 6 LENT 1

The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart.
Romans 10:8-13
"God speaks in all sorts of ways – through scripture, through nature, through other people. However, unless we slow down and listen, we miss his promptings and his voice."

MONDAY, MARCH 7

Your words are spirit, Lord, and they are life. Ps 18: 8-10,15
"Before entering a place of prayer, a room or before beginning the day pause at the threshold for the length of an 'Our Father' and become aware of God gazing on you in love."

TUESDAY, MARCH 8

The Lord rescues the just in all their distress. Ps 33: 4-7, 16-19
"Kindness always starts with noticing the needs of others. Everyone needs kindness – everyone is hurting somewhere."

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9

A humbled, contrite heart, O God, you will not spurn.
Ps 50: 3-4, 12-13, 18-19
"Don't wait to show a kindness. Do it while you have the opportunity. Do it now."

THURSDAY, MARCH 10

On the day I called, you answered me, O Lord. Ps 137: 1-3, 7-8
"In telling our own stories we were able to invite God into our lives anew and to recognise his powerful presence among us."

FRIDAY, MARCH 11

Go and be reconciled with your brother first. Mt 5: 20-26
"It is impossible to love anyone fully and at the same time to resent someone else. You cannot give total love when your heart is divided – and a bitter heart is a divided heart."

SATURDAY, MARCH 12

They are happy who follow God's law! Ps 118: 11-2, 44-5, 7-8
"We are called as the people of God to serve the communities in whose lives we share and to be people of vision."

SUNDAY, MARCH 13 LENT 2

The Lord is my light and my help. Ps 26: 1, 7-9, 13-14
"By slowing down, and being more present to each moment, all sorts of lessons are learned. For me, it is an invitation to a whole way of being – one that recognises that God is not 'out there' to be sought, but already 'in here' to be found."

MONDAY, MARCH 14

Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate.
Lk 6: 36-38
"Sometimes a touch on the shoulder, a tear, a hug, a grasp of the hand is all a hurting person needs."

TUESDAY, MARCH 15

Learn to do good, search for justice. Isaiah 1:10, 16-20
"The letter of St. James teaches us that genuine faith must be expressed in action. We must use our riches to serve others."

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16

They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised up again. Mt 20: 17-28
"I thought about the things in my backpack that I didn't really need for the journey that were weighing me down and restricting my movement. I thought about things in my life that need to move. I thought about things in my heart that need to move."

THURSDAY, MARCH 17

Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News.
"I believe that true evangelisation is born of love and desire: a love for people and a desire that everyone on earth come to know the love of Christ and the blessings of living in his kingdom."

FRIDAY, MARCH 18

Remember the wonders the Lord has done. Ps 104:16-21
"When the going is heavy and all uphill, God sends me his breeze; when the going is easy, he warms me with his sun."

SATURDAY, MARCH 19

You have said: love is built to last forever, you have fixed your constancy firm in the heavens. Ps 88: 2-5, 27, 29
"Saturday morning began in prayer, contemplating God's unconditional love for us and his willingness to reform us when we fail."

SUNDAY, MARCH 20 LENT 3

The Lord is compassion and love. Ps 102: 1-4, 6-8, 11
"Before we can love others, we must feel and understand how deeply God loves us. We need to feel God's love – unloved people are unloving people."

MONDAY, MARCH 21
My soul is thirsting for the Lord, the Lord of my life. When shall I see the face of God? Ps 41: 2-3, 42: 3-4
 "As we sought the face of the Lord we were filled with light, joy, peace and love."

TUESDAY, MARCH 22
Your Father will not forgive you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart. Mt 18: 21-25
 "We need to build people up rather than tear them down."

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23
O praise the Lord, Jerusalem! Ps 147: 12-13, 15-16
 "Don't just live the length of life: live the breadth of it as well."

THURSDAY, MARCH 24
Anyone who is not with me is against me. Lk 11: 14-23
 "Sometimes my path is blocked and I cannot go the way I choose."

FRIDAY, MARCH 25
Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will. Ps 39:7-11
 "Walking long distances forces me to slow down. It helps me to be still and to practice being fully present to each particular moment."

SATURDAY, MARCH 26
What I want is love, not sacrifice. Hos 5:15 - 6:6
 'We are all called to speak, live and act in ways that bring the good news of God-with-us to those we meet.'

SUNDAY, MARCH 27 LENT 4
Your brother here was dead and has come to life.
 Lk 15: 1-3, 11-32
 "Without God, there is no life, no movement, no change."

MONDAY, MARCH 28
No more will the sound of weeping or the sound of cries be heard.
 Is 65:17-21
 "Sometimes the days are all uphill - sometimes I can't see round the next corner, but I have to trust that the path is still there."

TUESDAY, MARCH 29
The man was cured at once. John 5:1-3, 5-16
 "In this time of prayer, as we searched in the silence, we put aside all distractions to seek God's face."

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30
The Lord is kind and full of compassion. Ps 144:8-9, 13-14, 17-18
 "Kindness is love in action – a practical expression of love. It is visible and active."

THURSDAY, MARCH 31
O Lord, remember me out of the love you have for your people.
 Ps 105: 19-23
 "Giving ourselves to others in love takes courage. We can only do this knowing that we possess God's indestructible love."

FRIDAY, APRIL 1
The Lord is close to the broken-hearted Ps 33: 16, 18-21, 23
 "When someone is grieving, just being there is an expression of kindness – we don't need to know what to say."

SATURDAY, APRIL 2
Lord God, I take refuge in you Ps 7: 2-3, 9-12
 "Remember to seek moments of peace and tranquility."

SUNDAY, APRIL 3 LENT 5
What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed, we were glad.
 Ps 125
 "To experience God's presence is to experience the light in God's shining face."

MONDAY, APRIL 4
If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. Jn 8:12-20
 "It's easy to love people who are kind and lovely, but if God is going to teach us to love, he will bring some hard-to-love people into our lives."

TUESDAY, APRIL 5
O Lord, listen to my prayer and let my cry for help reach you.
 Ps 101:2-3, 16-21
 "The sharp points on my journey are the growth points."

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6
He has sent his angel to rescue his servants. Dan 3:14-20, 24-25, 28
 "The message of the angels is nothing less than the infinite God of love come down, God-with-us, reconciliation, new life."

THURSDAY, APRIL 7
The Lord remembers his covenant forever. Ps 104: 4-9
 "Prayer is just being with God, being before God, trying just to sit with God. It's about the journey from the head to the heart."

FRIDAY, APRIL 8
In my anguish I called to the Lord and he heard my voice. Jer 20:10-13
 "So often we hurry through life, rushing from one task to the next, barely pausing to reflect or listen to the voice of the Lord."

SATURDAY, APRIL 9
I will make them into one nation. Ezek 37:21-28
 "Our mission to serve cannot be restricted in terms of nationality, social group or religious affiliation."

PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 10, HOLY WEEK
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Ps 21: 8-9, 17-20, 23-24
 "Sometimes we have to suffer pain and bereavement."

MONDAY, APRIL 11
He does not cry or shout aloud. Is 42:1-7
 "In our busy stressful world we have to consciously find silence."

TUESDAY, APRIL 12
My lips will tell of your help. Ps 70: 1-6, 15, 17
 "We sat by the fire and shared laughter and companionship."

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13
I did not cover my face against insult and spittle. Is 50:4-9
 "Instead of rehearsing hurts over and over, release them."

HOLY THURSDAY, APRIL 14
If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. Jn 13: 1-15
 "We can choose to put on love. If it were a feeling, we couldn't control or command it, but it's not a feeling – it's a choice."

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 15
After Jesus had taken the vinegar he said, "It is accomplished," and bowing his head he gave up his spirit. Jn 18: 1-19, 42
 "God's love for us and the kind of love we are to have for him and for others is *agape* – unconditional, giving, sacrificial love."

HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 16
He is not here; he has risen. Lk 24: 1-12
 "The best use of life is love; the best expression of love is time; the best time to love is now."

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 17
We are witness: that all who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name. Acts 10: 34, 37-43
 "We are called to live out our baptismal anointing: to be a light in the world, to bring joy to others through the message we proclaim."