

# *Daily Reflections*



## *for Lent*

PART TWO

27TH MARCH - 17TH APRIL | 2022



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

## An Introduction

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Welcome to these Lent resources, and grateful thanks to those around the Diocese who have contributed to them. As we step further into the diocesan Year of the Eucharist, we do so within the *Participation* element of the Synod journey Pope Francis has invited us to walk in pilgrimage. Lent is the holy season when our heavenly Father invites us to return to him with all our heart; an opportunity to seek healing and to know the transforming mercy of God.

We walk these forty Lent days with Jesus, the Son; a pilgrimage of grace in which we look to Him for new direction, for healing and for hope. Our participation in His way of the cross is one which is walked in weakness and need, and paced by the patient love he shows us on the road.

As you walk the path ahead, lean on these resources for your support, guidance and inspiration. Worry less about the pace you set for yourself and be open to the stirrings of the Holy Spirit in the silence of this holy season.

May God's mercy flow like mountain streams, falling like the morning dew. May the healing balm of forgiveness wash away our iniquity, cleanse us from our sin and lead us to a joyful celebration of the Risen Lord on Easter Sunday.



Monsignor Andrew Faley  
Episcopal Vicar for the Vicariate for Faith & Mission

# A prayer for Ukraine | CAFOD

Loving God,  
We pray for the people of Ukraine,  
for all those suffering or afraid,  
that you will be close to them and protect them.

We pray for world leaders,  
for compassion, strength and wisdom to guide their choices.

We pray for the world  
that in this moment of crisis,  
we may reach out in solidarity  
to our brothers and sisters in need.

May we walk in your ways  
so that peace and justice  
become a reality for the people of Ukraine  
and for all the world.

Amen.



4th Sunday of Lent

Sunday 27th March 2022

First Reading: Joshua 5: 9-12; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 33: 2-7;

Second Reading: Second Corinthians 5: 17-21; Gospel: Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32

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Today's gospel passage is one of Jesus' very familiar stories, and it reads rather like a short play with its three main characters: a father and his two sons. Yet it is easy to overlook the *reason* for Jesus' telling of this story. His reason comes at the very beginning: 'The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and scribes complained. And so, Jesus spoke this parable to them ...'

The younger son in the story is a fun-loving lad who gets bored easily with the humdrum existence of everyday life. He wants adventure, to do things differently. He reckons there has to be more to life than just a boring routine and a keeping to the rules. He is permanently restless, looking for things that will give meaning to his life.

The older son has a different character. He has given up on any idea of trying out new things. He has become set in his ways and doesn't like change. He is reliable. He does all that is asked of him. But his initiative has gone. He is more comfortable with routine. In Jesus' story, this older son represents the religious folk, the Pharisees and scribes. He is the son who says, 'But we have always done it this way! There is no need to try anything new!' Meanwhile, his younger brother represents all of us who experiment with this, and take a bit of a risk with that and, in so doing, sometimes get things wrong and upset people – yet ultimately, he has the strength of character to say 'Sorry, I messed up.'

Then the father.... Siblings in families can often antagonise one another. This can be true in any of our relationships. Yet the father loves both his sons with all his heart. We might identify with the older son one day, and with the younger son another day. Yet the embrace from the father awaits each of us.

**Reflection written by: David Coxon, Parish of St John Boste, West Durham**

4th Week of Lent

## Monday 28th March 2022

First Reading: Isaiah 65: 17-21; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 29: 2, 4-6, 11-13;

Gospel: John 4: 43-54

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John recounts by first letting us know that Jesus had made known that, "A prophet is not respected in his own country."

He is giving an indication that his own people did not listen to his teaching, they had not recognised him.

I think we can all relate to not being heard. Sometimes it can be in conversation about our faith that our words can be ignored or even scorned.

John then tells us that Jesus arrives in Galilee where he is welcomed – he must have been eager to teach the people there.

Jesus encounters the government official who is desperate for help, his son is about to die.

It feels like a rebuke when Jesus says to him, "None of you will ever believe unless you see miracles and wonders!" However, Jesus is drawing our attention to Him to not only rely on signs and wonders but to be determined and persistent in our belief as the official was for Jesus to heal his son.

Jesus hears the official's cry of help telling him "You may go. Your son will live!" Although the official did not know this as a fact till later, he left Jesus in total trust believing him.

He was greeted on his return by a servant – with great joy his son lived.

Jesus's love, compassion and generosity, in healing the son, leads the official through faith to deeper trust and bearing fruit, and leads his family and servants to faith and trust in God.

We are strengthened in our faith by the examples of the people in our communities from our Parish Priest, our families and friends, some who may no longer be with us, but their example of faith still strengthens us now in our lives.

In our journey through Lent God is leading us to draw closer to knowing Him.

His compassion. His Love.

**Reflection written by: Gillian Kendall, St. Oswald's, South Shields**

4th Week of Lent

Tuesday 29th March 2022

First Reading: Ezekiel 47: 1-9, 12; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm: 45: 2-3, 5-6, 8-9;

Gospel: John 5:1-16

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### Encounter Healing!

As I ponder over this gospel passage for the Lenten reflection, I see three strands of encounter here. About the man, Jesus and God!

What does this encounter tell us about the man who needs healing? The man is alone, has no one to help and sounds powerless. Having ascertained the situation, Jesus asks him a very pertinent question which might change his life forever: "Do you want to be made well?"

What does this encounter tell us about Jesus? We see Jesus showing his compassion, love, understanding and care. Jesus identifies himself with human suffering; in humility he listens to the man and offers him a chance of a lifetime.

What does this encounter tell us about God? To experience God's love, Jesus uses three verbs: "**Stand** up, **Take** your mat and **Walk**." If we observe carefully the conversation between Jesus and that man, it certainly takes us beyond the physical healing. The verbs suggest that we should not be afraid to act on the Word of God, as he offers us the steps for personal and community transformation.

If we see this story through the lens of Jesus' eyes we see that the miracle and transformation in the story symbolically points us to the mat. The mat is where the man had been lying for 38 years, even as he was trying to find ways of healing. Thankfully after the encounter with Jesus, the mat becomes a reminder of his healing despite the fact that the man didn't even know who had given him new feet. He later recognises that it was Jesus who had made him well – the same Jesus who would allow his own feet to be nailed to a tree to offer that man – and us – the good news in the history of broken bodies, minds and hearts.

It is here that Jesus wants to equip us with the transformation that God is offering: "to rise, and take up our mat, whatever that may be, for us and walk." Through Jesus we are reconciled to God, to ourselves, to our neighbourhood and communities. When we are reconciled, we can truly love, and when we truly love, we are able to walk towards the peace which the Word of God offers. This Lent, let's be willing to tell someone how Jesus helped us encounter healing!

**Reflection written by: Alison Rebello, St Aidan's, Benton**

## 4th Week of Lent

# Wednesday 30th March 2022

First Reading: Isaiah 49: 8-15; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 144: 8-9, 13-14, 17-18;

Gospel: John 5: 17-30

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The stranger tells the religious authorities of his encounter with Jesus, an encounter that has ended his suffering of 38 years, he is healed and restored, rejoice! Confusion turns to anger in their hearts, they are unable to share his joy, this miracle has broken the Law, in their opinion such 'work' is forbidden on the Sabbath!

Jesus challenges their attitude to the Law and the Sabbath:

'My Father goes on working, and so do I.' The Divine purpose cannot be held within any expectations, limits, boundaries or what can be defined as 'work'. The grace of mercy and compassion is indiscriminate and utterly generous. 'The Lord is full of compassion...abounding in love.' Ps 144: 8

Like those who challenge Jesus, we too can sometimes try to define and limit who and how God can forgive or heal by our own limited understanding and prejudices. His indiscriminate generosity is a challenge that our minds are too small to fully understand and our hearts too small to stretch beyond the boundaries of our frail loving.

Instead of this limited way of responding to people we are invited to participate in God's generous vision of humanity, to rejoice not to complain:

'I will make a highway of all the mountains and the high roads shall be banked up. Some are on the way from afar, others from the north and west, others from the land of Sinim. Shout for joy, you heavens, exult, you earth! For the Lord consoles his people and takes pity on those who are afflicted.' Is 49: 13

This Lent may our fasting bring a renewed understanding of our complete dependence upon God's benevolence. May our praying transform the smallness of our hearts and minds moving them to have joy and exult together with heaven in God's generosity. May our acts of charity make us more like Jesus who said of himself, 'For the Father loves the Son and will do greater things than these, works that will astonish you.' John 5: 20

May our contemplation of Jesus move us to generous actions of loving, forgiving and healing our neighbour, may we be astonished. **Shout for joy and exult!**

**Reflection written by: Fr Mark Millward,**

**English Martyrs Ss Peter & Paul, St Joseph, St Bede, Stockton-on-Tees**

4th Week of Lent

Thursday 31st March 2022

First Reading: Exodus 32: 7-14; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 105: 19-23;

Gospel: John 5: 31-47

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TRUE LIFE IS FOUND IN JESUS.

*"Do not imagine that I am going to accuse you before the Father."*

If someone starts to tell you something, and then their lips wobble, and their voice cracks, you know that tears are not far away, and that this person addressing you is speaking from the heart. What they are saying is very important to them, and they want you to understand this, too. So, when I read this challenging Gospel passage, I feel that Jesus, when he utters these poignant words, is trying hard not to weep. He is telling the hard-hearted Jewish authorities that he has exactly what they want: TRUE LIFE and SALVATION – and yet they refuse these precious, longed-for gifts. In fact, they refuse to accept the Giver, Jesus himself. No wonder he is on the verge of tears!

John 5:31-47 (which brings to an end Jesus' first Public Discourse in John's Gospel) is directed at the Jewish leaders who are foolishly rejecting the Promised Messiah standing in front of them. However, before I dare to point the finger of blame at Jesus' audience, I have to realise that this Gospel is for me – and, dear reader of this reflection, for you. Have we – you and I – been content to bask in someone else's light? Does God's Word really find a home in us? Are we studying the Scriptures for the wrong reasons? Does human approval mean everything to us? Is there no love of God in us?

These are hard-hitting questions, needing honest answers, and very appropriate indeed for this Lenten season. But, on re-reading the whole extract, the words of Jesus that jumped out at me were: "Do not imagine that I am going to accuse you before the Father." How consoling! Jesus isn't angry with us. He does not want to make us feel fearful or guilty. No, he wants only the best for us; that's why his broken heart is saying all this. So, today, let's not harden OUR hearts, but listen to the voice of our loving Lord.

Merciful Father, may our soul-searching and sincere repentance make us your obedient people. May the love within us be seen in what we do, and lead us to the joy of Easter. Amen!

**Reflection written by: Sr Francis Stringer, Convent of Mercy, Sunderland**

## 4th Week of Lent

# Friday 1st April 2022

First Reading: Wisdom 2: 1, 12-22; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 33: 16-18, 19-21, 23;

Gospel: John 7: 1-2, 10, 25-30

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We have to remember that Jesus, during His Ministry on earth, even while preaching about the Father, was always a good practicing Jewish boy, who adhered to the customs and rules then in place. It was the time of the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot, in Hebrew) which is one of the three Pilgrim Festivals.

Leviticus prescribes that the Jews are to dwell, or at least to eat in the booth (Sukkah). The sukka symbolises God's Protection during the Hebrews' time in the Desert. Sukkot is celebrated by taking four types of plant; palm, citron, myrtle and willow, and carrying them in procession in the Synagogue or the Temple.

The Tabernacle was a portable container in which was kept the Holy of Holies which in turn contained the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark contained the Tablets of the Law, the Seven Branched Candlestick, the Table for Shewbread, and the Golden Altar for incense.

Have you ever thought that when we receive Holy Communion, we become living, walking, tabernacles; containers of the Holy of Holies? How does that fact affect our demeanour, our outlook, our meeting with other people? Do we believe that my body, your body is where God plans to meet us, because our bodies become the Tent of Meeting?



**Reflection written by: Deacon Jude Newton, St Ninian's, Wooler**

4th Week of Lent

Saturday 2nd April 2022

First Reading: Jeremiah 11:18-20; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 7:2-3, 9-12;

Gospel: John 7:40-53

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“So there was a division among the people over him.” Isn’t there always? The Church has been deeply divided for over a thousand years.

The Pharisees had set ideas, if anything didn’t seem to fit perfectly with their own notions they rejected it. But yet, individually are we not all sometimes guilty of that? To think that Christ can be wrapped up in a convenient form that is tamed and doesn’t trouble us too much; either collectively, to be placed in a tabernacle, or individually, that we can put him in our pencil case with the rulers and protractors by which we plot out our lives.

Nicodemus had sought Jesus out and was at least on the first stage of a journey. He did not fully understand but he had the courage to try to make the others more receptive to Jesus’ message.

Of course that is what we should all be doing in this world of doubt, indifference and despair. The entire concept of a God who is so filled with love for his creation that he would dwell amongst us and lay down that life accepting a shameful and horrible death, for the salvation of us all, is a belief that unites us and we should not be divided about how that message is proclaimed.



**Reflection written by: Carl Watson, St. Osmund’s, Gainford**

5th Sunday of Lent  
Sunday 3rd April 2022

First Reading: Isaiah 43: 16-21; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 125;

Second Reading: Philippians 3: 8-14; Gospel: John 8: 1-11

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In the Readings for Lent on this day, Isaiah reminds us that God is always preparing new paths for us, new growth and opportunities, new living water in the wilderness – all for His chosen ones. Paul in Philippians tells us that his goal is to know Christ, share in His resurrection and the suffering needed, and leave the past behind and move on into new life.

In the Gospel, John shares the story of a woman dragged before Jesus. In Bible times, a woman was seen as property. If her husband died, with no sons or a brother to take her in, she was left in penury. Many turned to selling themselves in order to survive – a desert life of poverty, aloneness and desperation. With no understanding, care or sympathy, this woman was brought to Jesus, testing Him in his response to the law; but in Jesus, there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1). All He gives was and is love, welcome, understanding, compassion and forgiveness; always another chance, an opportunity to find my true worth.

Jesus looks upon her, hears her cry, hears the easy self-righteousness and condemnation of those around her. But he sees only potential, as he does in all of us. He writes in the dust of our lives, reminding us of our call to love others, support them and bring them the Good News. He reminds us of things we, too, have done, things we accept and offer to Him to take away. He looks upon us, as he did that day, meeting the eyes of the one standing before Him – no accusation, no condemnation, only love and expectation and He trusts that she will respond to the grace, to His love, and to go the way God hopes for all of us as we try to continue to learn from our mistakes and to do the same for others.

**Reflection written by: Pat Kennedy, MPS St Cuthbert's, Kenton**

5th Week of Lent

## Monday 4th April 2022

First Reading: Daniel 13: 1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 22

Gospel: John 8: 12-20

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As humans, we seem to have a deep seated, almost primeval, fear of the dark. This theme plays out to great effect in many films and novels – what is lurking, unseen in the shadows? Lack of light can mean lack of knowledge. The invite to follow Jesus, is an invitation into light, and the promise of leaving the darkness behind. Such a powerful invite to embrace. Light is also life giving. I love that in Italian, to give birth (dare alla luce) literally means to 'give to the light'. With the newness of light, we can recognise things for what they really are. We can dispel our misunderstandings and essentially, our fears.

The 'I am' sayings of Jesus link us back to the revelatory experience of Moses when he encountered the burning bush. The darkness of ignorance of God was overcome by the light when God revealed his name. Ultimately, this light brought freedom to the people of God.

John's Gospel starts with the beginning, and Jesus' revelation as the light of the world is evident at the beginning of Genesis. The first words that God speaks is 'Let there be light' and there is. This light dispels the darkness over the deep, we will never walk in darkness.

The 'I am' sayings of Jesus show us that our faith is not primarily in structures of belief but in a person. The light of the burning bush illuminated the personal name of God, the light of the world illuminates the divine nature of the person of Jesus. The light shows us the fullness of things.

We pray that Jesus, light of the world, will illuminate our lives and dispel our fears.

**Reflection written by: David Bayne, Head of 6th Form,  
St Robert of Newminster Catholic School & 6th Form, Washington**

5th Week of Lent

Tuesday 5th April 2022

First Reading: Numbers 21: 4-9; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 101: 2-3, 16-21;

Gospel: John 8: 21-30

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Today's Gospel finds Jesus speaking to the Pharisees. But it isn't a real conversation. The Pharisees fail to understand who Jesus is, or what he is saying to them. Jesus is teaching the people that he has come from God the Father, that he comes to reveal the truth about the Father, and that he will give his life to set us free from sin. By his sacrifice, Jesus will open the way to eternal life. But the Pharisees cannot hear the life-giving truth that Jesus reveals. Their hearts and minds are closed.

Jesus' whole ministry is driven by his intimate relationship with his Father: 'What the Father has taught me is what I preach.' He reveals the truth to us, and he invites us into conversation. Real prayer is just that; an honest and intimate conversation with our Father, who loves us and longs to hear from us. John tells us that many people came to believe in Jesus when they heard his teaching. Others rejected him – they were unable to hear the truth. The challenge in today's Gospel is this: are we ready to enter into a real conversation with Jesus, to hear his life-giving Word, and to believe in him?



**Reflection written by: Fr Andrew Downie, Parish Priest of St Cuthbert's,  
Durham & Durham University Catholic Chaplain**

## 5th Week of Lent

# Wednesday 6th April 2022

First Reading: Daniel 3: 14-20, 24-25, 28; Responsorial Psalm: Daniel 3: 52-56;

Gospel: John 8: 31-42

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In a few days' time, we will ponder with Pilate: "What is truth?" In today's readings from the Book of Daniel, we have the account of the three, Shadrach, Mishak and Abednego, prepared to sacrifice their lives for the sake of truth. In today's Gospel, we listen as Jesus challenges the Pharisees to know and accept that only the truth will set them free; free from their slavery to sin.

How often the words of Scripture, set for the day, pierce like "the two-edged sword" into our hearts and into the heart of the matter. Surely, at every turn, in the world today, we witness truth on trial: ridiculed, abused and bent out of shape; dissected into strange parts by lawyers until its very essence is concealed. How many of us use a favoured News Channel, newspaper, online source, to the exclusion of most others? What chance for today's world to be set free by truth?

In John's Gospel, we have recently been with Jesus in the hills around Lake Galilee where so many have been excited and inspired by his words and the wonders they have seen. His Disciples are eager to accompany him to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles where, they know, Jews from near and far will gather to remember God's favour and guidance of their ancestors through their exile in the Wilderness. Jesus sends his Disciples on without him, assuring them, yet again, that "his time had not yet come". Jesus does, however, follow on down to the city, but quietly. There he makes several visits to the Temple impressing the pilgrims with his remarkable teaching and authority. The Pharisees are outraged. They try to silence Jesus but he confronts them to listen to the truth and recognise the Father's voice. Jesus is sent by his Father that the Jews may know the truth "and the truth may set them free". These proud "sons of Abraham" demand respect for their rabbinical learning from this untutored preacher from the countryside. (Again for our day, how familiar!) "If you were children of Abraham, you would do as Abraham, yet you seek to kill me who is sent by God to bring you truth."

*Continued...*

The Pharisees know so much about minutiae of the Law but Jesus is at pains to let them understand, as in previous meetings, that it is how they act and react, not their knowledge of the Law, which reveals their hearts: compassion to the needy not resorting to Laws of the Sabbath to justify neglect. And further, as Pope Francis would remind us, "The Gospel and the Eucharist are cure for the sick, not reward for the good". And what do we see when the light of truth probes the shadows of our own hearts? Are we, too, quick to claim privilege and seek excuse? Do we risk hearing the chilling reprimand, "My words find no place in you"?

Before each day in the Temple, facing his adversaries, Jesus spent his nights in prayer on the Mount of Olives. Here is the Source I can trust. May I learn from his ways that I may "know the truth" and "the truth may set me free".

**Reflection written by: Sr. Maureen Limer, St. Mary's, Sunderland**



5th Week of Lent

Thursday 7th April 2022

First Reading: Genesis 17: 3-9; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 104: 4-9;

Gospel: John 8: 51-59

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Today's Gospel is edgy and full of conflict. I find it unsettling. We see Jesus's disputation with the leaders in the Temple coming to a climax. They do not understand what he is saying to them, questioning him and appearing to seek explanations of his statements, although one senses the derision and mocking tone behind the probing.

Sitting attentively with this passage, I am aware of two main reactions. The first is a sort of self-doubt. If I project myself into the position of the Temple leaders hearing such radical and challenging words coming from an apprentice carpenter without formal religious qualifications, would I not also smirk to myself, think the individual somewhat unhinged and devise mocking questions to trip him up? Would I react any differently in such a scenario? I think of the times during Mass when I sit comfortably, warmed by liturgy and Word, to listen to the homily and hope secretly that it is not going to challenge me or make me think and act out of my comfort zone. Just as the Temple elders preferred to think and act in the old ways, maybe many of us do the same in church, and resent any statement or teaching that forces us into new channels.

My second reaction is one of fear, fear for Jesus's safety. I know that by his speaking out so daringly and publicly, the enemies and the danger are beginning to draw closer. I feel I am watching a drama that is beginning to shape towards its climax.

During a visit to the Church of the Beatitudes near the Sea of Galilee a few years ago, I was moved by the beauty of the building. People sat to contemplate and pray. Again, despite the loveliness of the place, I was aware in myself of a strong sense of fear. I wanted to exhort Jesus to be careful, not to rock the boat with his preaching.

I think that is called missing the point to an absurd degree, but the fear shows how timid I am in daring to proclaim, and how complacent I am in my comfortable ways.

**Reflection written by: Bev Hallam, Our Lady of Lourdes, Chopwell**

5th Week of Lent

Friday 8th April 2022

First Reading: Jeremiah 20: 10-13; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 17: 2-7;

Gospel: John 10: 31-42

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Although Jesus and Jeremiah are separated by 600 years, in today's readings we find them both under threat as they stand on the same Holy Ground in the heart of the city of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah's lament followed a humiliating night spent in the stocks in the Temple. Since boyhood he had been a prophet of the Lord, and for decades had unsuccessfully warned the authorities that their religious faithlessness and their playing politics were blinding them to the fatal power of the Babylonians pounding on the doors of the city.

The Jewish authorities did not want to hear bad news, so their annoyance often led them to punish the prophet – as in his night in the stocks – or at other times when they sought to take his life. The remarkably intimate cry on the lips of Jeremiah is part of the lament of a lover who has been deceived, yet still trusts.

The small, simple Temple of Solomon, familiar to the eyes of Jeremiah, was demolished by the Babylonians and the Ark of the Covenant was lost-without-trace. The new Temple we find in John Chapter 10 was an utterly different sight to Jesus: it had been started by Herod the Great 40 years before, and now it extended over dozens of acres. With the loss of the Ark, the Holy of Holies would continue to stand empty, but the Temple's grand courtyards, fine stones and precious metals meant that it was already recognised as one of the greatest feats of construction in the whole Roman Empire.

On the Feast of Dedication, as Jesus looks out over the people hostile to his words, the Temple was still a work in progress and the nearby scaffolding, building materials and sympathetic workers provide a ready source of stones with which the crowds could pelt the Galilean preacher.

The message of Jesus is not that of Babylonians-at-the-door, but that of God-In-Their-Midst and the sad story of the blindness of the people carries its own lament.

We pray for the grace of discernment that our hearts might see.

**Reflection written by: Fr Dermot Preston SJ, St Dominic's, Newcastle**

5th Week of Lent

Saturday 9th April 2022

First Reading: Ezekiel 37: 21-28; Responsorial Psalm: Jeremiah 31: 10-13;

Gospel: John 11: 45-56

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Do you ever imagine a different future for yourself? Many of those who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus, the last and greatest of Jesus' signs, began to believe in him. Their future would indeed be different, transformed as it was into a new way of life in Christ.

But others, like the chief priests and the Pharisees in today's Gospel, would not countenance the possibility of change. Their status and privileged position were threatened by the actions of Jesus and they wished to maintain the status quo. They did not deny the reality of the miraculous signs, but they did not understand their meaning, for they failed to believe.

Blinded by prejudice they decided to put Jesus to death. It was better, they thought, for one man to die, to save the whole nation. The argument of the powerful in every age is used: eliminate the awkward trouble-maker in the name of the (their) common good. But Caiaphas spoke wiser than he knew in his unconscious prophecy. For Jesus had used similar words about himself: 'The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'. Jesus was to die for the people, for all people of all ages, including for me.

Pope Francis, reflecting on this text, stresses that Jesus died specifically for each and every one of us individually. This is the ultimate expression of God's love for all.

Reflecting on the Gospel I ask myself: Is this not a good time to acknowledge and to cast aside my own prejudices? In order to protect my own position or status, have I ever condemned or shunned another?

And let us pray that as we enter this coming Holy Week that we may be given the strength and grace to accompany Jesus in his passion, but also that we be allowed to share in the glory of his resurrection.

**Reflection written by: Jem Wynne, Holy Name, Jesmond**

Palm Sunday

Sunday 10th April 2022

Procession: Luke 19: 28-40; First Reading: Isaiah 50: 4-7;

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 21: 8-9, 17-20, 23-24; Second Reading: Philippians 2: 6-11;

Gospel: Luke 22: 14-23:56

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As we enter Holy Week, there is much to reflect on but one word which entered my mind was "decisions". How important are the decisions we make in our lives and what is the impact on ourselves and others? Jesus had agonised the night before as He spent time praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. Did He need to go through with His crucifixion, or would God His father release Him from this burden? Of course, he decided to obey the will of God, His Father. A decision that was momentous for all of mankind.

Jesus was taken before the Governor, Pilate, a man used to making important decisions, who knew in his heart and mind that Jesus was innocent. He, however passed on that decision to Herod who in turn passed it back to him. How often do we do that, afraid to make unpopular decisions even though they are the right ones? Pilate again proclaimed the innocence of Jesus but this time he was faced with a hostile crowd "Crucify Him, free Barabbas". Against his better judgement Pilate made the decision to do what the people wanted. How much is our decision making swayed by others rather than by justice, humanity and what God wants us to do? Do we too wash our hands of our responsibility to love and care for all others?

It was not the decision of Simon of Cyrene to make that final journey with Christ but how it must have changed his life. To walk along with Jesus as we have been asked to do, particularly during Lent, to witness first-hand that intense human suffering of our Divine Lord. Compassionately reflecting on the Passion of Our Lord is never easy. As we do reflect, the realisation of how great his everlasting love for us is that He was willing to undergo this torture for our salvation should fill us with awe. Jesus' last human decisions were to grant forgiveness to the repentant thief and to commend His spirit to God His Father.

Let us pray, today, that the Holy Spirit will guide our decision making so that we too can wholeheartedly offer ourselves to the Lord.

**Reflection written by: Leonie Ducker, St Joseph's, Blaydon**

# Monday of Holy Week

## Monday 11th April 2022

First Reading: Isaiah 42: 1-7; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 26: 1-3, 13-14;

Gospel: John 12: 1-11

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Bethany, the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus was a place of welcome, rest and repose for Jesus. He felt at home there. Imagine the scene; see the room, hear the conversations, notice who is there.

Focus on Mary as she kneels at Jesus' feet and anoints them. Stay with this act of love, generosity, extravagance, goodness. Breathe deeply and imagine the scent of the perfume, the fragrance, pervading the room.

What goodness can you spread in your day/life? What fragrance do you add to people's lives? Maybe we can reflect Mary's goodness by how we are with others: forgiving, generous, loving. Jesus receives her sacred action open-heartedly. What gift do you wish to receive today?

There is also tension in the room. Allow yourself to feel it. Judas objects to using this costly ointment saying the money could have been used for the poor; to feed the hungry, to heal the sick, to give shelter to the homeless. As you listen to his criticism, the tone of his voice, what is your opinion? Do you find some truth in what he is saying? What do you feel about that? It makes no sense to him. But the pouring out of love doesn't always make sense. Mary is giving all she is and all she has. Her love for Jesus is priceless. His love for us is priceless. Poured out extravagantly.

As you ponder these thoughts, return to watching the scene at Bethany. How are you looking on Mary's extravagant action now? How is that fragrance pervading your life, soul, spirit?

Maybe try to imagine Jesus kneeling at your feet anointing them with expensive ointment in an act of generosity and extravagance. What is it like?

Gradually leave the scene and spend some time praying with: What is this Gospel passage calling me to in my life at the moment?

**Reflection written by: Sr Sheila McNamara rscj. Sacred Heart Community,  
Fenham, Newcastle**

## Tuesday of Holy Week

# Tuesday 12th April 2022

First Reading: Isaiah 49: 1-6; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 70: 1-6, 15, 17;

Gospel: John 13: 21-33, 36-38

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The readings confront us with some stark contrasts!

In the Gospel, we have Judas Iscariot. Who can truly know his motivations and understand what was going through his mind? But, he paints a sad picture. In contrast we have in the first reading, an enigmatic and nameless character known as the 'Suffering Servant', who is seen as a foretelling of Jesus and his death and resurrection. All four 'Suffering Servant' poems are given to us in Holy Week, the last and longest being our first reading on Good Friday. This figure is confident in God's calling but it has clearly not been easy –

"He said to me 'You are my servant Israel in whom I shall be glorified', while I was thinking, 'I have toiled in vain. I have exhausted myself for nothing.'"

He is a model of faithfulness, self-giving love and hopeful trust. Indeed, what a contrast to Judas!

We also have light and darkness. In the Gospel, we are simply yet starkly told 'Night had fallen'. This is not just a telling the time of day but that the 'darkness' of this world has taken hold of the situation. But, we are also told that 'now that the Son of Man has been glorified' and that in our first reading this character is to be 'the light of the nations'.

We finally have St Peter's heartfelt enthusiasm for Jesus 'I will lay me life down for you' but also his complete unawareness and blindness to his limitations, that will all too soon be laid bare, "'Lay down your life for me?' answered Jesus. 'I tell you most solemnly, before the cock crows you will have disowned me three times.'"

Faced with these contrasts of: a very flawed person and with the embodiment of faith, hope and love in the Suffering Servant; night and light; a sheer enthusiasm to imitate Jesus but a blindness to one's human weakness, we all need to be honest that each human and every community is the stage by

*Continued...*

which the drama of these contrasts is lived out. So, we acknowledge our flaws, our own 'night', our weakness. But as THE drama of our salvation is played out in the coming days as well as being honest, we are called to be hopeful. It is the suffering servant who is totally belittled but is ultimately vindicated; Peter dramatically and pathetically fails but is forgiven, loved and transformed.

Finally, as the Paschal Candle is lit on Saturday evening, we celebrate what St John states at the start of his Gospel 'All that came to be had life in him, and that life was the light of all, a light that shines in the darkness, a light that darkness could not over power'.

So confronted with these stark contrasts dynamic within us and in our world, be honest yet hopeful!

**Reflection written by: Fr Chris Hughes, Parish of St Cuthbert and St Joseph,  
North Shields**



# Wednesday of Holy Week

## Wednesday 13th April 2022

First Reading: Isaiah 50: 4-9; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 68: 8-10, 21-22, 31, 33-34;

Gospel: Matthew 26: 14-25

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Betrayal: a stranger to the children of my mother.

Many years ago, I felt deeply hurt and struggled with coming to terms with a betrayal. Betrayal from a close friend or relation can be deeply painful. Our unredeemed nature is to resist, fight back or walk away from such situations. Holy Wednesday is one of those days that can be very uncomfortable to people who are deeply religious and at the same time struggle with deep wounds of recent or historical betrayals.

It is this discomfort that we are invited to bring into the Triduum celebration as we accompany Jesus' own experience of betrayal, so that we may learn that out of betrayal a greater love may emerge. The gospel reading of today comes after the reading of Maundy Thursday, the feast of agape. By washing his disciples' feet and sharing a meal with them, Jesus showed that love still has the final word even amidst the betrayal. Like us, Jesus was not devoid of feelings, anger, sorrow, and grieving over a loss of a relationship. Despite these feelings, Jesus still had a caring concern for Judas by inviting him to table fellowship.

Jesus calmly says, "truly I say to you, one of you will betray me." Why did Judas betray Jesus? What were his hopes and dreams? Probably his desire for material wealth made him steal from the coffers and sell out Jesus for 30 silver coins. For three years, Judas had journeyed with Jesus. For three years, he must have listened to the teaching of love, forgiveness, and mercy. For three years, he must have seen the miracles and wonders Jesus performed. In Judas, we too see our tendencies of betrayal. The greatest rejection is of oneself when we refuse to set our hearts free by forgiving and healing of our hurts.

Corrie ten Boom, who survived imprisonment in a concentration camp for her part in saving many Dutch Jews from the Holocaust, captures the healing power of forgiveness in a short story titled "*I'm Still Learning to Forgive*":

*And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. "I forgive you, brother!" I cried. "With all my heart!"*

**Reflection written by: Fr. Philip Adede Amek, Our Lady of Mercy Parish,  
Sunderland**

Maundy Thursday

Thursday 14th April 2022

First Reading: Exodus 12: 1-8, 11-14; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 115: 12-13, 15-18;

Second Reading: First Corinthians 11: 23-26; Gospel: John 13: 1-15

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The Passover is approaching. St. Luke tells us 'Jesus taught in the temple by day and prayed in the garden each night'. This is Israel's independence day, and friends are gathered for the festival. Rooms are like gold dust unless you have contacts. Jesus has arranged to celebrate Passover at the house of a friend and supporter.

Jesus' group assembles, and the atmosphere is sombre. Judas is awarded a place of honour by the Master's side. The host begins to feed his guests with bread from a dish as is custom. It is an expression of friendship and one last chance for Judas to repent. They say the eyes are the window of the soul, and Jesus sees Judas is intent on his purpose. He announces that there is a betrayer in the room, and suddenly there is uproar. How do I know this?

In the 1880s, an Anglican scholar was researching in Cairo; at the time, many tombs were being robbed. On a local market, he spotted a fragment of papyrus he thought might be important. He bought this tiny extract of St. Matthew's Gospel and posted it back to Cambridge.

It lay forgotten, next to Oscar Wilde's hat, until 1992. Then a German expert on papyri discovered it and began to examine the writing; his discovery was exciting. Scribal writing changed its style every 10-20 years. This document was similar in style to a known document of 65AD; this dates the fragment to 20 years before the Gospel of Matthew we know today. This version of the Gospel goes back to the lifetime of the Apostles themselves; disciples were still alive who could witness to its accuracy.

This version of Matthew's Gospel says that all the disciples were speaking at once, all declaring "not I Lord, surely". Jesus predicts that Zechariah's prophecy that all the sheep would be scattered will be fulfilled, and not only Judas will betray him.

Yet Jesus confirms their table fellowship and demonstrates his service by washing their feet. They are left to ponder on a parable, that in the upside-down word of God's Kingdom, the King is servant, and the one who ministers, is Master.

At the end of the meal, after Jesus' mystical words of institution, they sing 'the Hallel' to end the Passover ritual. Darkness has fallen.

**Reflection written by: Fr Philip Quinn, Parish of St Wilfrid & St Cuthbert, Blyth**

Good Friday

Friday 15th April 2022

First Reading: Isaiah 52: 13-53: 12; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 30: 2, 6, 12-13, 15-17, 25;

Second Reading: Hebrews 4: 14-16; 5: 7-9; Gospel: John 18: 1-19: 42

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Our Lord Jesus Christ was fully aware of the sufferings that awaited him. He knew that he would die on the cross of Calvary. He had the authority to stop all that from happening but he did not. Rather, he resolutely accepted to endure the humiliation and painful death on a cross in obedience to the will of God the Father. He was betrayed by Judas, Peter denied him, his disciples abandoned him at Calvary but Jesus remained focused and was determined to accomplish his mission.

The resoluteness and courage with which Christ endured his passion and cross stand as model for us in our own lives and struggles. Let us use this special day in the life of the church to re-examine our mission on earth. Why did God create me?

There may be pains in the process of accomplishing my mission on earth. There may be challenges from those we love. These challenges should never be allowed to distract us from our mission. In the face of trials, we are encouraged to remain firm and not lose faith. Anchor on the joy that comes at last. And like Jesus, say 'into your hands I commend my spirit'.

Dear Lord, reveal to us our mission on earth. Encourage us to perfectly accomplish that mission. Strengthen us when we become weary on our journey. Following your example, may we learn to accept the will of God in all things even when it entails enduring some difficulties or putting up with some inconveniences for the sake of a higher good. Grant us the grace of true conversion that we may experience the joy of the heavenly glory with you at the end of our earthly life. Amen.

**Reflection written by: Sr Ngozi Chukwu (DDL), St. Wilfrid's Presbytery,  
Gateshead**

Holy Saturday

Saturday 16th April 2022

Mass of Easter Night: First Reading: Romans 6: 3-11;

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 117: 1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Gospel: Luke 24: 1-12

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Today, Holy Saturday, is a still day, a silent day before Easter Sunday. After the drama of Good Friday and Jesus' death and burial, we are in silence and emptiness, listening to the silence of the dead. In today's Prayer of the Church, an ancient nameless writer tells us that the King is asleep, that 'God has died in the flesh and hell trembles with fear'.

In this silent time between death and resurrection, Jesus is at work. In the Apostles' Creed we profess that he 'descended into hell' where he seeks Adam and Eve, our first parents, to draw them and all held in sin's darkness into light, and from death into life. The ancient writer tells us that just as Adam and Eve lost their garden paradise because of their sin, Jesus chooses to be betrayed in a garden, and crucified and buried in a garden to save us from our sins.

Jesus was spat upon by the soldiers to restore the life once breathed into us; he received the soldiers' blows to refashion our warped nature in his image; he was scourged to remove the sin that weighed us down; his hands nailed to the tree for those who once stole the fruit from a tree in the garden of Eden.

Just as the devil led us out of the earthly paradise, now Jesus enthrones us in heaven. Through sin we were forbidden the tree of life, but now Jesus who is life itself, is one with us. The kingdom of heaven has been prepared for us from all eternity.

Today, the Church calls us to wait in silence for Jesus who invites us into new life through his resurrection. In these still hours before Easter Sunday we rest a little, gather ourselves together and wait for the new light to dawn.

**Reflection written by: Mgr Andrew Faley, St Edward's Church, Whitley Bay**

Easter Sunday

Sunday 17th April 2022

First Reading: Acts 10: 34, 37-43; Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 117: 1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Second Reading: Colossians 3: 1-4 or First Corinthians 5: 6-8; Gospel: John 20: 1-9

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St John's account of the resurrection which we read at Mass today is full of excitement! John tells us in precise detail that Mary arrived at the tomb early and finding the stone rolled away ran to tell the others. Mary told Peter and John and they ran to the tomb to see what was happening. There they saw the linen cloths in which Jesus' body had been laid. John tells us plainly that they saw the empty tomb and believed. We then learn of Mary's encounter with the risen Lord, she thought he was the gardener until he mentioned her name. There was a feeling of excitement among the disciples and they in turn ran to tell the others that the Lord had risen. The news is so wonderful and life changing that they want to tell everyone about it. We too should be ready to share the good news of the resurrection with all those we encounter.

We have not seen Jesus physically yet like Mary, he calls us by our name through our baptism. Baptism is the beginning of our friendship with him and the deep desire that each of us have to be united with him. All our sins have been taken away by his suffering and death and now we find forgiveness and new life. Jesus' death liberated us from sin and death and his resurrection opens to us new life, the life of the Holy Spirit.

Every day we see glimpses of the resurrection and share in the excitement of its first witnesses. Our faith in the risen Lord makes us optimistic, joyful and ready to take on new challenges. Through prayer and the sacraments, we unite ourselves more fully to our Lord, sharing his sacrifice on the cross and experiencing through it the power of the resurrection.

*Father of mercies you sent your Son to go before us in death and in life – to search for us while we were lost. Renew in us the grace to seek the risen Lord, to run to meet him and so find the grace of new life.*

**Reflection written by: Bishop Robert Byrne C.O. Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle**



# WALK AGAINST HUNGER

**This Lent, challenge yourself to conquer 200k (that's 5k a day, every day, for 40 days), in solidarity with mums like Amie, so more children like Lombeh can grow up big and strong.**

There are 200 million children around the world whose lives are at risk from malnutrition. By walking 200k this Lent you can help give hunger its marching orders.

**Sign up to the *Walk Against Hunger* challenge at [walk.cafod.org.uk](http://walk.cafod.org.uk)**

With each small step, we can make **BIG** things happen. Training in farming, nutrition and health care will empower women and help their families live free from hunger.





# LENT APPEAL 2022

**Have a simple meal  
this Lent and give  
what you save  
so more children  
can grow up big  
and strong.**

**£10 could provide a hard-to-reach  
community with corn seeds  
for the planting season.**

Give online today at  
**[cafod.org.uk/lent](https://cafod.org.uk/lent)**



Lombeh was dangerously malnourished as a baby. She was so small she almost died.

Lombeh's mum, Amie, told us: "The sickness was just getting worse and we were scared."

Thankfully, Amie and a small team of local health experts made sure Lombeh got the support she needed. Now, she's big and strong.

Around the world, there are 200 million more children like Lombeh whose lives are at risk from malnutrition.

# YEAR *of the* EUCHARIST

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

Encountering the Son -  
Communion

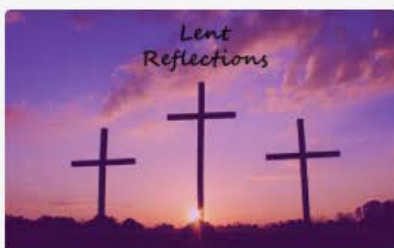


 DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

As part of the Diocesan Year of the Eucharist, the Vicariate for Faith & Mission has produced a second reflection booklet, with reflections written by people from across the Diocese reflecting on how they encounter Jesus in their lives.

There is also a selection of other reflections, including weekly reflections written by Fr Sean Hall, available on the Diocesan website: <https://diocesehn.org.uk/living-the-faith/liturgy-prayer/#prayer>

## PRAYER RESOURCES



### Weekly Reflections

Fr Sean Hall's reflections for the First Sunday of Lent.

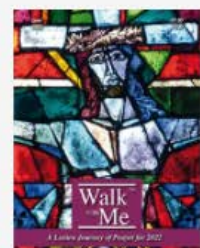
[READ MORE](#)



### Monthly Reflections

The Feast Day of St Joseph is on Saturday 19 March, a reflection from Pat Kennedy MPS.

[READ MORE](#)



### Walk with Me – A Lenten Journey of Prayer for 2022

Walk with Me is underpinned by the power and grace of the basic gospel message and an opportunity to proclaim the truths of our faith, which gives life: the incarnation, the death and resurrection and the power of the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost.

[ORDER HERE](#)

# YEAR *of the* EUCCHARIST



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

In the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, Bishop Robert has announced the Year of the Eucharist - a year in which we can refocus ourselves on Christ, present among us in the Eucharist, to deepen our love and reverence of the Mass. Visit our diocesan website for more information and to see what's happening across the diocese.

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Pope Francis and the Synod office in Rome are inviting the whole Church to become Synodal. We are invited to journey together, listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the lives of the people we meet.



Visit <https://diocesehn.org.uk/> for more information



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**  
— VICARIATE FOR FAITH & MISSION —

*With sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to these wonderful Reflections throughout the Season of Lent.*

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