

Anglican Diocese
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An occasional letter: 68

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Opportunities

Join the [online](#) Scargill
Community for Holy
Week and Easter and
retreat with the
Community



An [online retreat](#) –
Easter Triduum with the
Carmelites



An [online retreat](#) for
Holy Week with
Anglican Priest Rev. Dr.
Christopher Landau



[Listen to this:](#) In the
valley of death by Rachel
Chaplin



A convent of Poor Clare
Sisters [opened its doors
for the first time](#) to four
guests

Walking on in faith regardless of the circumstances



The mocking of Christ by Fra Angelico. (1437-1446)

There are many paintings of Christ's betrayal and crucifixion. Here is one where we see the cruelties of Christ's tormentors represented as fragments floating in the space around the white-robed, blindfolded victim Jesus: a disembodied head spits at our Lord, and a floating hand strikes him with a rod. As we reflect, this does indeed provide a grim glimpse into the extent of scorn, abuse, and contempt Jesus bore in the lead-up to His crucifixion. On Good Friday we bring both head and heart to the foot of the cross. We may want to puzzle over the why of it: Why did this have to happen to Jesus? Why do we keep returning to this bloody act? Why does it matter?

Nobody *wants* to suffer, but it seems to be part of the deal of life. As Julian of Norwich said in the middle of the plague:

'If there be anywhere on earth a lover of God who is always kept safe from falling, I know nothing of it — for it was not shown me. But this was shown: that in falling and rising again, we are always held close in one love'.

Mysteriously, the real glory of the Christian faith seems to come when Jesus invites us to 'share in his sufferings' as we find when we read for example Philippians 3:10-11, where he invites us to follow him all the way. Not just resurrection life, but death and resurrections. Not just glorious Christian living and abundant blessing, but suffering and glory. Reflect on the sufferings you have had to deal with during the past year?: Physical, Mental, Spiritual. Journal all that has caused you to suffer intolerably. Draw your own picture of the crucifixion and nail all that you have suffered personally and suffered because of others' pain to the cross.

The desert Father and mothers saw crucifixion (suffering of all kinds) as much more effective than fasting and praying for the purification of the soul. Would you agree with this? What has been your experience?

Pray this Prayer: The Soul of Christ prayer:

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O Good Jesus, hear me.
Within your wounds hide me.
Permit me not to be separated from you.
From the wicked foe, defend me.
At the hour of my death, call me
and bid me come to you
That with your saints I may praise you
For ever and ever. Amen.

We can be so familiar with the story of Holy Week that it can often breed unfamiliarity. So, I invite you to read Matthew 26:36-56

Read. Read the passage slowly.

Listen. Sit silently for one minute and pay attention to the words or phrases stand out to you.

Read. Read the passage a second time and intentionally pause between phrases and sentences.

Listen. Prayerfully ask: To what area of my life does that word or phrase relate? Sit silently for two minutes and listen.

Read. Read the passage a third time, again slowly.

Listen. Prayerfully ask: Is there an invitation or next step for me, related to this word or phrase? Sit silently for two minutes, and without trying to figure out the invitation or next step, just listen.

When you have completed this process, feel the freedom to sit quietly for a minute or two, or write down the words or phrases that stood out to you, or the invitation you heard God opening to you

Very often in our lives, like Jesus' journey to the cross, much pain comes at the hands of others, experiencing abandonment, persecution, ridicule. There is an Ignatius Spiritual discipline called *Acte Contrare* which means acting in the opposite direction to the prevailing spirit. What does this look like in practice? Let's take the 3 great Christian virtues: faith, hope, and love (1 Cor 13:13). The spiritual discipline is this. If you suddenly feel fear, act in faith. If you suddenly become overwhelmed by that cloak of despondency, consciously act in the opposite direction with hope. If judgemental or critical thoughts start to plague your mind, consciously act towards the person in love. Try it. Like any discipline; it will take conscious practice.

May God's peace and love prevail as you walk through Holy Week 2024.