

Sermon 2023 03 24 Text

In the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Companion on the Journey. Amen.

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Our Lenten Study has sought to prepare for the turmoils of the week which begins today.

But I want to take us back to the beginning of our Lenten journey.

On Ash Wednesday we prayed this Collect, which has been repeated every day since that beginning of Lent: -

Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have made,
and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent:
create and make in us new and contrite hearts,
that we, worthily lamenting our sins,
and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may obtain of you, the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lenten Study this week looked forward to the journey of every aspect of this Holy Week. Holding the events of this week in tension with the prayer for Ash Wednesday.

Our journey begins today with the procession of the palms and the glorious proclamation of Jesus as king and saviour.

On Tuesday as many as possible of the clergy of the Diocese will gather at St John's Cathedral to renew our ordination vows as Deacons, Priests and Bishops; and Archbishop Jeremy will consecrate the three Holy Oils (holy chrism --to be used

throughout the Diocese in the sacraments of confirmation and ordination; the oil of the catechumens -- which is used in the sacrament of baptism; and the oil of the healing and protection which is used offered to for the sick and as protection for the traveller).

On Thursday we will reflect on the Last Supper, the washing of the disciples' feet, the meal of the Exodus, and the crucifixion of Jesus. We will wander almost without purpose through Good Friday reflecting on the crucifixion and in the afternoon, the death of Jesus. We will live out the daylight hours of Holy Saturday in mourning and hopelessness. Then our Easter Eve will begin our Easter Day with the lighting of the new fire to symbolise the resurrection from death to life of our Lord. We will begin the bewildering journey of the followers of Jesus and especially of Thomas who (like all of us) struggles to believe that a person may rise from the dead.

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Our study this week reflected on how we might live each day of this week and then to live each week against the background of violence, war and death which seems to insert itself into every breath of our life.

There is open war in Russia and the Ukraine, the festering battles of the Middle East and a continuity for well over a century in the homeland of our South Sudanese sisters and brothers.

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There is violence in our homes. The existence of Protea Place, another domestic violence service just across the road, the preparation of the building across Mort Street for Catholic Care,

and our own red bench all hold the truth the violence is not just a matter of armed aggression in foreign lands; and that we need to care for victims and change the motivations of perpetrators in the here and now..

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So do we go to Church the minimum four times and hope that God has some plan for the restoration of peace and love amongst his people. Or do we realise that we must be the leaven in the mixture – that we are the instruments of volume, texture and crumbling.

That we must scream for an end to fighting, for an end to hatred and for peaceful co-existence.

That we must create a humanity that is about compassion and respect nor numerous and more passionately than the voices who call for war and violence.

And that we must be agents of crumbling – that those who seek violence are reduced to specks on the ground, that the machinery of war rusts away unused and that the mechanism of war – those who demand violence to right some long forgotten wrong – fall away, lose followers and are left as little people hiding in the dark corners alone.

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For all its violence and bloodshed, this week is about peace – an end to hatred – an end to anything that separates one person from another.

This week Christ dies. His death is confronting, challenging and horrible. But its objective is to bring an end to death – no more

violence in this world, but the beginning of a gentle transition from a limited life to a life set free from all human bondage, a life to shine gloriously for it will continue in that space of pure, divine love which knows no limit and exists for eternity.

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