

Reflective Sheet: 2nd Sunday before Lent, 7th Feb 2021. This week's reflection is written by Claire.

Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
And wisdom to know the difference.
Reinhold Niebuhr (1982-1971)

Almighty God,
You have created the heavens and the earth
and made us in your own image: teach us to
discern your hand in all your works and your
likeness in all your children; through Jesus
Christ your Son our Lord, who with you and the
Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things, now
and forever. **Amen**

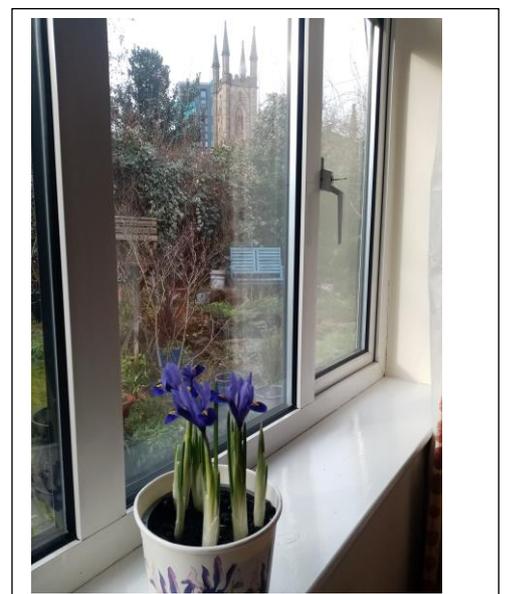
Readings: Psalm 104. 26-end; Proverbs 8, 1, 22-31; Col 1. 15-20; John 1.1-14

In this ever-changing landscape we are finding ourselves in it is really difficult to have any sense of control over things. It is difficult to plan as we have no idea what may be happening in the next few months. Will schools go back before Easter; will we be able to get control of these new variants; when can we meet our friends ... family.

Living well in the context in which we find ourselves is hugely challenging, when our normal everyday routines and practices are not there for us: we can not have a cuppa tea with a friend; share a meal; have normal everyday conversation; go to church; shop. As we shift in focus liturgically from the season of Christmas now looking towards Lent and the hope a joy of resurrection I wonder where we may find life in this season. Where is the hope and joy of resurrection to be found; where is life in all its flourishing?

The set readings for this Sunday all reflect God at the heart of all creation and life. "Ages ago I was set up at the first, before the beginning of the earth" (Proverbs 8. 23); O Lord how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of all your creatures ... when you send forth your Spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground" (Psalm 104. 24, 30). Our utter dependency on God as the source and well-spring of all life: "... you open your hand and we are filled with good things ... you hide your face and we are dismayed" (Psalm 104. 28,29). We also hear in John's Gospel the words we often associate with Christmas ... the Word becoming flesh: "All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being ... The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John1.3).

I have a small pot of iris which have started to flower. The photograph takes our eye from the flowers, into the garden and then beyond to the church building. It is the same garden where last year's Easter Candle was lit at first light to celebrate the resurrection. So, the iris represents the hope and the joy that is to come and that has already been. But importantly within the iris flower is also an image of God in creation. The beauty and joy of all that is created ... For She was there in the beginning before the world was created delighting and rejoicing in the human race (Proverbs 8. 31). It is difficult to find a sense of peace and wellbeing at this time. But I find if I look first to the beauty of the flower, the iris now opening out and connect that to my inner life and how God brings forth beauty and delight in all of us I begin to have a sense of peace beyond the chaos of the current world and the pandemic



around us. The flowers will come, the buds will burst, there will be spring once more upon the earth.

The mess we find ourselves in, the ever-changing sea of chaos around us is perhaps not an indicator of what is broken but simply unfinished, where God is still creating and making and healing. As Amanda Gorman wrote prophetically in her powerful poem, *The Hill We Climb*, to mark President Biden's inauguration: "When day comes, we ask ourselves where can we find light in this never-ending shade? ... And yet, the dawn is ours before we knew it. Somehow we do it. Somehow we have weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken, but simply unfinished ... Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree and no one shall make them afraid ... The new dawn blooms as we free it. For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we are brave enough to be it."

There is enough light for this season, there is enough kindness to get us through. But we can't expect to be able to fire on all cylinders at this time. We are weary and diminished because of all the heavy restrictions we are having to live with and the lack of control over any of these things. Our Christian Faith encourages us to look towards the light. The light for now is only half light, a crack of light but it is just enough light so long as we can adjust our eyes to a different kind of seeing.

There is a fulness of life to be embraced in this season. I suggest this fullness of life will be found in our determination to hold on in there and not give up, to keep moving in whatever way we are able towards the light and to allow some space within the desert for the iris and crocus to blossom and bloom.

I leave you with Mary Grey's reflection on Ibsen's play, the Wild Duck. The duck has been wounded (shot) and had sunk to the bottom of the lake, but then it surfaced and carried on: "Even if we sink to the lowest level of our existence; even if we are struggling with the mud and the reeds, if only we can hang onto our determination to keep diving back to the surface and keep living to the fulness of which we are capable, whatever our condition. That is becoming, growing, even flourishing as we reflect God's image. We can look forward to 'all tears being wiped away' in the fullness of time. But even now, as strength and power diminish, we can keep moving towards the light." (Mary Grey, 2009, p. 211. From an Edited Chapter: Grace Jantzen, Redeeming the Present).

Church Services

It seems really unlikely that we will be resuming Public Worship until at least the end of March. We will continue to send our weekly Reflective Sheets and offer a zoom service at 10.30am on a Sunday morning.

For Ash Wednesday we will have a shared zoom Service at 7.30pm with St Oswald's and St Andrew's. We will also hold some evening zoom study/reflections – details to follow.

For use in our own homes the suggestion is we share in reading together: ***Lent in Plain Sight – A Devotion Through Ten Objects by Jill Duffield***. It is easily available from Amazon **BUT** for those not able to get a copy please let either myself or Karen know, and we will happily send you a copy.

Claire.dawson@sheffield.anglican.org

0114 272 4987

Priest in Charge St Augustine's and Vicar St Mary's