

## St Mary's and St Augustine's Church: Reflections for the Third Sunday of Lent

Readings: Psalm 19; Exodus 20. 1-17; 1 Cor 1.18-25; John 2. 13-22.

This week's reflection is written by Claire.

"For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor 1.18). I am finding it just a little bit more difficult now to keep on going. This endless Lent/lockdown is wearing on the soul; like an endless wilderness stretching out ahead with little to break up the monotony. I have carefully marked off on my wall calendar the dates on the roadmap when lockdown begins to ease. Those who have been home schooling I am sure will embrace the 8<sup>th</sup> of March with a sense of joy and relief. There is something to be said about one foot in front of the other, little by little and step by step, just keeping going at this stage. Not winning any races but just keeping going is success and something to be pleased about!

I have been continued with reading the Lent book by Jill Duffield (a devotion through 10 objects), this week's object being the cross. The cross so symbolic of our Christian Faith ... as you think about the cross, I wonder what images come to mind? How does the cross resonate with you and your life? I often find it is a marker of suffering ... God's suffering but with the sense that this enables a 'being with': that God suffered so that he understands fully the suffering we go through. This week as I reflected again on the cross, I have shifted my focus to: what is to be gained by the cross? What's the prize so to speak. There is a sense that we need to be able to continue to walk through the pain and the suffering to realise the hope and joy promised for us and importantly gifted to us through the cross. The sense again of the need to keep moving or inching forward.

We are all probably feeling tired and fed up by now, rather fractious, certainly I am finding myself and others a little less reasonable and slightly more irritable than normal. There are always fractures in life, things which are broken and seem irreparable. Relations broken through a painful divorce, arguments within church life about how best to do things, pains that we carry that never seem to get any easier. All of these are marks of the cross and on their own without remedy wear us down and defeat us. Jill Duffield's reflections on the object of the cross takes us through this to glimpse the hope of the healing, the reconciliation, and the resurrection that the cross always points the way towards.

We shall go out with hope of resurrection,  
We shall go out, from strength to strength  
go on,  
We shall go out and tell our stories boldly,  
Tales of a love that will not let us go.  
We'll sing our songs of wrongs that can be  
righted,  
We'll dream our dream of hurts that can be  
healed,  
We'll weave a cloth of all the world united  
Within the vision of a Christ who sets us  
free.

June Boyce-Tillman

In you I believe that all will be well.  
So I shall speak of your name and your  
ways,  
Not with a shout that covers my doubts,  
But with a whisper that sounds the depths  
Of enduring.

Jim Cotter

“During these days of agonizing unravelling, be it divorce or a bitter argument, an inability to forgive, or the guilt of knowing our actions damaged a person we love, the cross of Jesus Christ hopes of healing as yet unrealized. Jesus Christ himself bore all things; in him all things hold together. Despite the painful reality that all things on earth, in our lives, in our families and churches, at times fall apart, the cross of Jesus holds all of us and all our chaotic circumstances together ...” (Jill Duffield, 2020, pp.56). It is the cross, this foolishness to those who are perishing but to those of us who are yearning for healing, for reconciliation, it is the power of God.

As we struggle through these last weeks of Lent and of lockdown, let us keep in whatever way we can moving forward. Allowing ourselves to glimpse the hope and possibility of reconciliation however farfetched this may seem. To continue to place our hope in the folly of the cross, whose power has been wrought through Jesus’s own blood and tears. We are not alone in our struggles and we can sense even now the joy of resurrection around us – we don’t need to wait until Easter Day!

### ***A Remnant of Resurrection***

The time for daffodils has come.  
Bunches of six, ten, or twelve,  
With tightly wrapped buds,  
Arrive from warmer lands.

Like sentinels of invitation  
The keep my wintered heart  
Leaning into Spring.

The directions say to cut  
At least a half inch off the stem,  
Then place in water and  
Wait for the surprise.

Behold, in the early hour of dawn  
I see resurrection on my kitchen table,  
Every yellowed daffodil hurrahing the morning,  
Stretching outward in the etched-glass vase.

But what captures my attention  
Is one small, thin, remnant,  
Voluntarily discarded,  
Beneath the smiling daffodils.

This dry, transparent cover,  
A cast-off tube of protection  
Once concealing a fragile bud,  
Conveys the price of blooming.

I pick up this remnant of resurrection  
And hold it for a long, silent time,

Wondering what soul-shroud of mine  
Needs to be unwrapped,  
Before I, too, am blooming.

Joyce Rupp

### **Collect for the Third Sunday of Lent**

Eternal God,  
Give us insight  
To discern your will for us  
To give up what harms us,  
And to seek the perfection we are promised  
In Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

Rev Claire Dawson

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### **Resuming Public Worship**

***We hope to be able to safely resume public worship on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April. This is provisional and we will keep you informed of developments and also plans for Easter.***