

LENT 2024

JOURNEY to FREEDOM

MONDAY 25TH MARCH

READ: Matthew 2:13-15

‘Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ Matthew 2:13

Today we are given a gospel reading alongside Exodus. Jesus’ life was unpredictable from the start. The circumstances around His early childhood were unsafe and now as we head towards Good Friday, the threat and the suffering intensify. But why are we looking back to the Christmas story in Holy Week? Because you cannot ask why Jesus died on the cross without considering why God came into the world. God saw the suffering of the people and interfered.

Joseph was asked to take Mary and baby Jesus and leave for a foreign land in order to protect the child, because He would have a special task to liberate God’s children. The life of Moses, whose story we have been following through Lent, has many parallels. His mother had to hide him as a baby, and he was destined to lead God’s people into freedom. Both Jesus and Moses became aliens in a foreign land. As an immigrant myself, I know that this has a lasting impact on someone’s identity and perspective, even if they later return.

God protected both Jesus and Moses for a special role in the future, but in that moment of escape and becoming a refugee I imagine it might have felt like a failure. When I consider the trials and failures of my life, I am relieved that the God of mercy enfolds even those experiences into my story. They are part of what makes me who I am and do not need to be excluded. In fact, God has walked through them with me and offers healing.

The running away, hidden periods of preparation, rejection, and restoration are all part of our story. And having gone through it all as a human being, Christ is there with us. We do not need to fear, for we are placing our feet into His footsteps.

If your story is to take the shape of Jesus’ story, like Moses’, where have you seen God’s hand guiding you when it all seemed to go wrong? Where are you called to relieve the suffering of God’s children?

Let us pray: *God of mercy, You bury our past in the heart of Christ and of our future You will take care. Amen. (Prayer by Brother Roger of Taize).*

The Revd Anna Walker, Director of Whalley Abbey