

LENT 2024

JOURNEY to FREEDOM

SATURDAY 30TH MARCH

READ: Matthew 27:57-66

‘Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.’

Matthew 27:61

So how was your day? This is a common question at the end of a day in homes amongst families and others we love. Sometimes there's some significant things to say, other days, not a lot. I've often thought that if every day in our lives was a spectacular experience, we couldn't cope with it this side of Heaven. Some people need to live in the highs and lows a little more than others, but the reality is some days are just ordinary. There is nothing wrong with that - it's called life, I guess.

Holy Saturday isn't ordinary in that sense but is the closest we get in the liturgical year to such a day. We neither have the emotion of the grief of the crucifixion, nor the exhilaration that flows from the reality of the empty tomb. Yes, hell is being harrowed and Jesus is God's agent in that. But for the Church Holy Saturday is the day when not much happens liturgically.

In fact, that's not a terrible thing. The spiritual life is not separate from everyday living. Sometimes we have the highs of knowing God's presence with us, others we may experience something that feels like the absence of God.

Today we pause as the Israelites pause on the banks of the Red Sea. The world waits for the saving knowledge of life in all its fullness. Today, we have buried the dead, we wait for the next things. This is in the knowledge that God will save but we rightly feel raw from the grief and brutality of crucifixion and not yet ready for the dawning realisation of the reality of Easter joy. Both those events represent the *aweful* (deliberate spelling!) majesty of God, and in between we have the reality of waiting for what is to come.

For Christians, the temptation is to leap ahead because we know how the story ends. Yet, I believe our lives are enriched by the preparedness to wait, knowing that sometimes there is nothing we can do in each situation but to wait upon God's saving help.

Let us pray: *Dear God, I'm reminded this Holy Saturday that You are no stranger to death, darkness, or doubt. Help me to remember as I wade within my own discomforts and fears today, that You are still alive, even when I can't see You. You know waiting is hard. And yet You allow it, for Your glory to be revealed in Your perfect timing. I rest in you, Lord, as I wait on what only You can do. Amen.*

The Venerable David Picken, Archdeacon of Lancaster