



WELCOME TO ST PETER'S ASH



THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AT ST PETER'S IS CALLED TO CELEBRATE, LIVE AND REFLECT THE LOVE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST

28th MARCH 2021

PALM SUNDAY

<u>READINGS FOR TODAY</u>	PARISH OFFICE: Please phone or use e-mail to make contact TEL:01252 331161; e- mail: office@saint-peters-ash.org.uk BOOKINGS OF WEDDINGS & BAPTISMS – phone for an appointment on 01252 321517 or 331161 WEBSITE: www.saint-peters-ash.org.uk
Isaiah 50 v 4 – 9a	
Philippians 2 v 5 - 11	
Mark 11 v 1 - 11	

THIS IS HOLY WEEK



HOSANNA! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!

READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK – EASTER DAY

Acts 10 v 34 – 43; 1 Corinthians 15 v 1 – 11;
John 20 v 1 - 18

DURING LOCKDOWN

If you would like to talk to Carol or myself at any time please phone us: Carol – 01252 313239. Keith – 01252 321517

Please pray for the souls of all the recently Departed, among them: JULIA HAMPTON; JOY DUNN; MOUGHAN DOWNS; STEVE EVANS; RITA WHERRELL

SHOEBOX UPDATE

265,975 That's how many shoe boxes were sent last year spreading joy and giving children an opportunity to learn about Jesus. Our boxes went to Moldova, Serbia and Bosnia. Thank you.

I would love it if we could be more 'green' this year. Wooden pencils, wooden handled skipping ropes, wooden yoyo or truck. Cotton facecloth, sisal soap bag, bamboo toothbrush and metal pencil sharpeners are all good. See if you can think of some more. Barbara Rose.

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

NO MON/TUES/WEDS EVENING COMMUNIONS

TUESDAY 30th – STATIONS OF THE CROSS - 7 – 30 pm to 8 – 30 pm (13) Jesus is taken down from the cross; (14) Jesus is laid in the sepulchre

Zoom link on our website – hard copies available

WEDNESDAY (31ST) – 9 – 30 am Holy Communion - church

MAUNDY THURSDAY (1ST) - 7 – 30 pm in church

GOOD FRIDAY (2ND) - 3 pm in church (no Walk of Witness or Quiet Hour)

NO EASTER VIGIL ON SATURDAY 3RD

EASTER SUNDAY (4TH) – 8 am in St Peter's Centre & 10 am in church with lighting of the new Easter Candle

Please tell us if you are intending to come on Easter Day

Phone Fr Keith on 01252 321517

CARE AND SHARE - tins, packets, UHT milk, tea, coffee etc. for the shelves outside church, please leave items on the shelves or on the doorstep of the Rectory.

ST PETER'S PRAYER CHAIN - If you would like prayer for yourself or somebody else please phone: 01252 322292 or 01252 323037 This is a confidential service.

BIRTHDAYS - Congratulations to all who are celebrating a birthday at this time.



Holy Week

SOME THOUGHTS ON TODAY'S READINGS FROM FR. KEITH

In recent weeks we have witnessed, on news programmes, what can so easily happen when crowds of people turn out onto the streets. Peaceful vigils and protests can very quickly turn violent. Tempers flare, missiles are thrown and each side blames the other for igniting the spark that set it all off. As casualty numbers mount people lose sight of the original purpose and the whole scenario can escalate and achieve a momentum of its' own which becomes more and more difficult to resolve. Such is fallen human nature.

This Palm Sunday it might be useful to hold some of those recent images in our minds eye, as we think again about the circumstances of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and then what happened after. What was in the minds of those who were out on the streets to greet Him on that day? What were their expectations and hopes? What did the Jewish and Roman authorities make of it all? How did these events impact on the rest the week ahead?

Some of the Jewish people, who were in Jerusalem on that day, would have been very aware that Jesus' arrival looked like the coming of the long-awaited Messiah. The prophecy of Zechariah had this to say: *'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you, triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'* (Zechariah 9 v 9) Also: *'The Lord will go forth and fight against those nations (gathered against Jerusalem for battle). On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives.....then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.'* (Zechariah 14 v 3 – 5 abridged).

Those who recognised those words from the Old Testament would most probably have had high hopes that the days of their suffering under the Roman occupation would soon be over. God had not let them down and here was the national hero they had been awaiting for so long.

On the other side, the Romans would have been well aware of the danger inherent here. A spark could ignite a situation that their masters back in Rome would not tolerate – heads would roll if things got out of hand. And likewise, on the Jewish side, those who owed their limited power to their Imperial overlords, wouldn't have wanted their fragile position threatened by any upstart from the north.

So, emotions would have been running high on all sides and Jesus is no doubt under strict surveillance as he rides in on that day. In his own mind He knew that His whole ministry had been leading up to this, and he probably had a pretty good idea of how things would pan out in the rest of that week. His resolve and courage would be tested. Although he was divine, he was also fully human, and so would have been experiencing all the mixed emotions, dreads and anxieties that any of us would feel in such circumstances. He is thus able to identify with us now, when we are facing situations of danger or challenge today.

Palm Sunday is the curtain raiser on a week like no other, for a great many people. A roller coaster of moods and emotions starts on a high, but quickly degenerates into the lowest of lows for Jesus and those who had put their trust in Him. There would be much pain and sadness to go through before the triumph of Easter Day dawned. But let's not forget also, that for a great many others, this was just another ordinary week. As will be the case today, the majority of people will not be even thinking about Jesus

today, on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, even at Easter itself. Life, for them, will just go on as normal.

So, what should we be taking from all of this? At the time, trouble was avoided on Palm Sunday itself, but the same people who were welcoming Jesus so enthusiastically were very quickly manipulated, a few days later, to clamour for his death. How inconsistent we human beings can be, how easily stirred up by the unscrupulous to serve their own desires. The unreliability of even Jesus' most devoted followers quickly shows itself when he is arrested and dragged off for trial on trumped up charges. As the drama of Holy Week unfolds how much will resonate with us about our own attitudes and behaviour, I wonder?

The path that Jesus was to take was one that few of us would willingly follow, I suspect, and yet he remained faithful to His Father's will to the end and beyond. 2000 years on it can be difficult for us to immerse ourselves in these events. We see the results of human cruelty so often that we can easily become indifferent and detached. We can even start making excuses for failure and try to rationalise inexcusable behaviour because we may see ourselves reflected in some of it. The story of Holy Week can expose our own weaknesses and failures in what we've done, or not done, and that's not easy to take.

Holy Week is, nevertheless, at the very centre of our year. We *should* be spending it in penitence and reflection. Sadly, those things that took Jesus to the cross are all too plainly still with us today – human greed, selfishness, cruelty, and uncontrolled passions, all blight God's world still. The only person who can break us out of the cycle of failure is Jesus himself. His sacrifice on the cross is our way out if we can bring ourselves to take it. We need to become one with Him – truly following Him in faith – only then can we change for good.

Jesus was not the Messiah many of His fellow countrymen wanted Him to be, and so they were easily persuaded to abandon Him. To those in power he was too threatening to be allowed to go on, they wanted Him out of the way and were prepared to lie and pervert the course of justice to achieve that. This week we should ask ourselves what are our expectations of God, and how much are we prepared to listen to Him rather than try to do things our own way.

What Jesus did was for the good of all, what we do is so often only for our own good. This week let us remember the mistakes of the past and pray for forgiveness and guidance for the future. Ask God, how can we play our part in turning this world around, so that peace and justice may become a reality for all. We *can* make a difference if we listen and learn from Him who gave His life that we may have life to the full both here and on into eternity.

QUOTE FOR HOLY WEEK

'The Cross is the word through which God has responded to evil in the world. Sometimes it may seem as though God does not react to evil, as if he is silent. And yet, God has spoken, he has replied, and his answer is the Cross of Christ: a word which is love, mercy, forgiveness. It is also reveals a judgment, namely that God, in judging us, loves us. Remember this: God, in judging us, loves us. If I embrace his love then I am saved, if I refuse it, then I am condemned, not by him, but my own self, because God never condemns, he only loves and saves.' - Pope Francis

Morning Prayer at 10 am on Sunday

(A recording of this service is available to view now on the St Peter's website.)

PALM SUNDAY

If there is more than one person present, someone may wish to read the parts marked (L), everyone says the rest together. You can say alternate verses in the Psalm and in the Canticles. Please have a Bible to hand.

(L) O Lord, open our lips

All: and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

(L) During Lent we have been preparing by works of love and self-sacrifice for the celebration of our Lord's death and resurrection. Today we begin this solemn celebration in union with the Church throughout the world. Christ enters his own city to complete his work as our Saviour, to suffer, to die, and to rise again. Let us go with him in faith and love, so that, united with him in his sufferings, we may share his risen life.

A candle may be lit

All: Hosanna to the Son of David.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Behold your king comes to you, O Zion, meek and lowly, sitting upon an ass.

Ride on in the cause of truth and for the sake of justice.

Your throne is the throne of God, it endures for ever; and the sceptre of your kingdom is a righteous sceptre. You have loved righteousness and hated evil. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows.

Hosanna to the Son of David.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

This hymn is said or sung:

*Ride on! ride on in majesty!
Hark! all the tribes hosanna cry;
Thy humble beast pursues his road
with palms and scattered garments strowed.*

*Ride on! ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die;
O Christ, thy triumphs now begin
o'er captive death and conquered sin.*

*Ride on! ride on in majesty!
The winged-squadrons of the sky
look down with sad and wondering eyes
to see the approaching sacrifice.*

*Ride on! ride on in majesty!
Thy last and fiercest strife is nigh;
the Father on his sapphire throne
awaits his own anointed Son.*

*Ride on! ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die;
bow thy meek head to mortal pain,
then take, O God, thy power, and reign.*

(L) The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind:

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

(L) Christ himself carried up our sins in his body to the tree, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds we have been healed.

(A moment is kept for silent reflection)

All: Lord Jesus Christ, we confess we have failed you as did your first disciples. We ask for your mercy and your help. When we take our ease rather than watch with you:

Lord, forgive us. Christ have mercy.

When we bestow a kiss of peace yet nurse enmity in our hearts:

Lord, forgive us. Christ have mercy.

When we strike at those who hurt us rather than stretch out our hands to bless:

Lord, forgive us. Christ have mercy.

When we deny that we know you for fear of the world and its scorn:

Lord, forgive us. Christ have mercy.

(L) May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The collect for Palm Sunday:

Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross: grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Read Isaiah 50 v 4 – 9a then Psalm 31 v 9 - 18 concluding with:

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

Read Philippians 2 v 5 - 11

(L) Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory. Christ humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and given him the name that is above every name.

All: Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

Now read Mark 11 v 1 - 11

Fr. Keith has written some thoughts on today's readings – see above, before the start of this service.

Now pause for your own reflections.

(L) Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God:

All: Though he was divine, he did not cling to equality with God, but made himself nothing. Taking the form of a slave, he was born in human likeness. He humbled himself and was obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Therefore, God has raised him on high, and given him the name above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

(L) We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you;
All: by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

(L) God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.
All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

(L) We preach Christ crucified, the power of God and the wisdom of God.
All: By your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

(L) God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.
All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you;
by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

We now say 'The Benedictus' together:

All: The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God.

- 1 Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, ♦
who has come to his people and set them free.
- 2 He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, ♦
born of the house of his servant David.
- 3 Through his holy prophets God promised of old ♦
to save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all that hate us,
- 4 To show mercy to our ancestors, ♦
and to remember his holy covenant.
- 5 This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
- 6 Free to worship him without fear, ♦
holy and righteous in his sight
all the days of our life.
- 7 And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the
Most High, ♦
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
- 8 To give his people knowledge of salvation ♦
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
- 9 In the tender compassion of our God ♦
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
- 10 To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the
shadow of death, ♦
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

All: The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God.

Prayers of intercession now follow

As we stand with Christ in His suffering we pray:

For forgiveness for the many times we have denied Jesus, and for the missed opportunities to share His truth with others, let us pray to the Lord

Lord, in your mercy – Hear our prayer

We pray for grace to seek out those habits of sin which mean spiritual death. Through prayer and self-discipline we seek to overcome them, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, in your mercy – Hear our prayer

We pray for all Christian people, that through the suffering of disunity there may grow a rich union in Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, in your mercy – Hear our prayer

For those who make laws, interpret them, and administer them, we pray that our common life may be ordered in justice and mercy, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, in your mercy – Hear our prayer

For those who still make Jerusalem and the Holy Land a battleground, for peace and unity, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, in your mercy – Hear our prayer

We give thanks for those who have the courage and honesty to work openly for justice and peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, in your mercy – Hear our prayer

We pray for those in the darkness and agony of isolation, that they may find support and encouragement. Help us to reach out to them, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, in your mercy – Hear our prayer

For those who, weighed down with hardship, failure, or sorrow, feel that God is far from them, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, in your mercy – Hear our prayer

For those who are tempted to give up the way of the cross, and for those who have lost their way from Your Way, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, in your mercy – Hear our prayer

That we, with those who have died in faith, especially JULIA HAMPTON; JOY DUNN; MOUGHAN DOWNS; STEVE EVANS and RITA WHERRELL may find mercy in the day of Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord in your mercy – Hear our prayer

For God's guidance for the future after Lockdown, that we may do his will, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord in your mercy – hear our prayer

Holy God, holy and strong, holy and immortal, have mercy upon us.

Let us ask that our prayers may be joined to Mary, Peter and all the saints, let us pray to the Lord, saying together:

All: Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

As Jesus taught us, so we pray: Our Father in heaven....

The following hymn may be said or sung:

*All glory, laud, and honor
To thee, Redeemer, King
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.*

Thou art the King of Israel
Thou David's royal Son
Who in the Lord's name comest
The King and Blessed One.

*All glory, laud, and honor
To thee, Redeemer, King
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.*

The company of angels
Are praising Thee on high
And mortals joined with all things
Created, make reply.

*All glory, laud, and honor
To thee, Redeemer, King
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.*

The people of the Hebrews
With palms before Thee went
Our praise and love and anthems
Before Thee we present.

*All glory, laud, and honor
To thee, Redeemer, King
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.*

To Thee, before Thy passion
They sang their hymns of praise
To Thee, now high exalted
Our melody we raise.

*All glory, laud, and honor
To thee, Redeemer, King
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.*

Thou didst accept their praises
Accept the love we bring
Who in all good delightest
Thou good and gracious King.

*All glory, laud, and honor
To thee, Redeemer, King
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.*

Let us pray:

(L) True and humble king,
hailed by the crowd as Messiah:
grant us the faith to know you and love you,
that we may be found beside you
on the way of the cross,
which is the path of glory. Amen.

(L) Lord Jesus Christ,
you humbled yourself in taking the form of a servant,
and in obedience died on the cross for our salvation:
give us the mind to follow you
and to proclaim you as Lord and King,
to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

(L) May Christ crucified draw us to himself,
to find in him a sure ground for faith,
a firm support for hope,
and the assurance of sins forgiven;
and the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us and
remain with us, this day and always. Amen.

(L) Let us bless the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God. Amen.

All: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace, and rise with Christ in glory.
Amen.

Evening Prayer for this week

*(See the website for a special Evening Prayer on
Thursday for those unable to be in church at 7 – 30 pm)*

O Lord open our lips,
and our mouth shall show forth your praise.

Let your ways be known upon earth
your saving power among the nations.

A lamp or candle may be lit.

- 1 Jesus, Saviour of the world,
come to us in your mercy: ♦
we look to you to save and help us.
- 2 By your cross and your life laid down,
you set your people free: ♦
we look to you to save and help us.
- 3 When they were ready to perish, you saved your
disciples: ♦ we look to you to come to our help.
- 4 In the greatness of your mercy, loose us from our
chains, ♦ forgive the sins of all your people.
- 5 Make yourself known as our Saviour and mighty
deliverer; ♦ save and help us that we may praise you.
- 6 Come now and dwell with us, Lord Christ Jesus: ♦
hear our prayer and be with us always.
- 7 And when you come in your glory: ♦
make us to be one with you
and to share the life of your kingdom.

This hymn may be said or sung:

My song is love unknown, my Saviour's love to me
Love to the loveless shown, that they might lovely be
Oh who am I that for my sake
My Lord should take frail flesh and die?

He came from His blest throne salvation to bestow
But men made strange,
and none the longed for Christ would know
But oh my Friend, my Friend indeed
Who at my need His life did spend

Sometimes they strew His way, and His sweet praises sing
Resounding all the day, hosannas to their King
Then "Crucify!" is all their breath
And for His death they thirst and cry

Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run, He gave the blind their sight
Sweet injuries! Yet they at these
Themselves displease, and 'gainst Him rise

They rise and needs will have my dear Lord made away
A murderer they save; the Prince of Life they slay
Yet cheerful He to suffering goes
That He His foes from thence might free.

Here might I stay and sing; no story so divine
Never was love, dear King! never was grief like Thine
This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise
I all my days could gladly spend.

That this evening may be holy, good and peaceful,
we pray with one heart and mind:

Silence is kept.

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your mercy come down upon us
to cleanse our hearts
and set us free to sing your praise
now and for ever. Amen.

*A Psalm is said: Mon 25; Tue 55 v 13 - 24; Wed 88;
Maundy Thurs 39; Fri 130; Sat 116 ending with:*

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever.
Amen.

*Two Scripture Readings now follow (see below). Between
the two readings we say:*

The royal banners forward go,
the cross shines forth in mystic glow;
where he in flesh, our flesh who made,
our sentence bore, our ransom paid.

There whilst he hung, his sacred side
by soldier's spear was opened wide,
to cleanse us in the precious flood
of water mingled with his blood.

Fulfilled is now what David told
in true prophetic song of old,
how God the nations' King should be;
for God is reigning from the tree.

O tree of glory, tree most fair,
ordained those holy limbs to bear,
how bright in purple robe it stood,
the purple of a Saviour's blood!

Upon its arms, like balance true,
he weighed the price for sinners due,
the price which none but he could pay,
and spoiled the spoiler of his prey.

To thee, eternal Three in One,
let homage meet by all be done:
as by the cross thou dost restore,
so rule and guide us evermore.

Readings:

Monday Lamentations 2 v 8 – 19; Colossians 1 v 18 - 23
Tuesday Lamentations 3 v 40 – 51; Galatians 6 v 11 - end
Weds. Isaiah 63 v 1 – 9; Revelation 14 v 18 to 15 v 4
Maundy Thursday: Exodus 11; Ephesians 2 v 11 - 18
Good Fri: Lamentations 5 v 15 – end; John 19 v 38 - end
Saturday: Job 19 v 21 – 27; 1 John 5 v 5 - 12

After the second reading we say:

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you;
All by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Christ committed no sin, no guile was found on his lips.
All We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree
that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.
All By your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

By his wounds you have been healed.
All We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you;
by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Gospel Canticle: The Magnificat (The Song of Mary)

All God's love for us is revealed
in that, while we were yet sinners,
Christ died for us.

1) My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit
rejoices in God my Saviour; he has looked with favour on
his lowly servant.

2) From this day all generations will call me blessed; the
Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his
name.

3) He has mercy on those who fear him, from generation
to generation.

4) He has shown strength with his arm and has scattered
the proud in their conceit.

5) Casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting
up the lowly.

6) He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the
rich away empty.

7) He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, to
remember his promise of mercy.

8) The promise made to our ancestors, to Abraham and
his children for ever.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever.
Amen.

All God's love for us is revealed
in that, while we were yet sinners,
Christ died for us.

Prayers of thanksgiving are made for the day that is ending. Intercessions are offered for the church, the world and for individuals, the sick and the departed.

SERMON FROM BISHOP JO

Divine Dominoes

Our Father, who art in heaven ...

This hymn may be said or sung:

There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified
Who died to save us all.

We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains he had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.

He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good;
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by his precious Blood.

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.

O dearly, dearly has he loved,
And we must love him too,
And trust in his redeeming Blood,
And try his works to do.

Let us pray:

Almighty and everlasting God,
who in your tender love towards the human race
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the cross:
grant that we may follow the example
of his patience and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you humbled yourself in taking the form of a servant,
and in obedience died on the cross for our salvation:
give us the mind to follow you
and to proclaim you as Lord and King,
to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray, and in your great
mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night,
for the love of your only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

All: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen.

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy
of God, rest in peace. Amen

Liturgy of the Passion: Mark 14.1 – end of 15

I wonder when you last played a game of dominoes. Nobody exactly agrees on the rules, of course, about things like whether you put the double six sideways at the beginning of the game or not, and how you judge who comes second – whether by adding up the number of remaining pieces or the number of the dots on the remaining pieces. But every single person in the whole wide world who has ever played a game of dominoes agrees on one single thing: there comes a point in every game when you lose interest in the regular rules and instead you make a long snake by lining every piece up on its end about an inch apart and then watching them topple over. And you will find that YouTube provides the proof: because there you will find thousands of people who have deemed their efforts of lining up and then toppling over myriad upon countless myriad of dominoes in ever more elaborate cascades worthy of viewing by the whole world.

I invite you to think about that cascade of dominoes for a moment: about its metaphorical power. I never exactly excelled at history in school but I do recall all sorts of topics that, with hindsight, were explicable by reference to dominoes. For example, the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian empire. On July 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, was shot by a Serbian assassin in Sarajevo. Austria-Hungary prepared for war with Serbia. Russia prepared to defend Serbia against Austria-Hungary. Germany prepared to defend Austria-Hungary against Russia. France prepared to defend Russia against Germany. Germany prepared to attack France through Belgium. Britain prepared to defend Belgium against Germany. The Turks rallied behind Germany. Japan rallied behind Britain. Within a month, all were at war. The first domino fell; and the rest came tumbling down. Four years later, 15 million people were dead.

Another example might be Rwanda. Before the Belgians came, the minority Tutsi had ruled over the majority Hutu. The colonial Belgians exacerbated the tensions between the peoples, and by the time they left, the Tutsis held almost all the political and economic power, while the Hutus were mostly landless and poor. In 1962 the Hutus overthrew the Tutsi monarchy and instituted a Hutu republic. In 1990 Tutsis invaded from Uganda and started a civil war. In 1994 the Hutus assassinated their own president and initiated a genocide of Tutsis, killing 800,000 in 100 days. Years later the refugee Tutsis, now in north-eastern Congo, initiated a civil war in the Congo. Again, as one domino falls, it leads to another, and another. And alas there seems no end to it, even today.

Holy Week tells a story of falling dominoes. I urge you to read the whole account of the passion in one sitting – Mark chapters 14-15, or if you prefer one of the other gospels. One after another of the disciples, the crowd, the Pharisees, the Romans, the Sadducees, the scribes, the criminals, the bystanders, the pilgrims all fall down one after another. It's a domino story. It's a fall story. It's a kind of multi-dimensional, violent re-enactment of the story of Adam and

Eve. A mixture of temptation, short-sightedness, fear, panic, forgetfulness, stupidity, and rebellion leave practically every character sprawled on the ground like fallen dominoes.

Except for one. That's what we see in Holy Week. We see God, in human form, insert two hands into that cascade of falling dominoes, and say, "Stop." The dominoes have been falling so fast for so long and so violently that those two hands that intervene get overwhelmed, crushed, obliterated. They get nailed. Because they're divine hands, they have the power to stop even a rampaging torrent of plummeting dominoes. But because they're human hands, they hurt like hell. That's what happens in the cross. The divinity of humankind says "Stop." And the humanity of God gets crushed.

But "Stop" doesn't turn out to be the last word. In the greatest miracle, a miracle that you won't find on YouTube but the most wondrous thing that ever happened, God raised Jesus from the dead. And every one of those dominoes, whose combined weight had fallen on and crushed Jesus when he dared to say "Stop," now slowly, meticulously, mesmerically, is raised back to its full height, to play and be enjoyed again. Every domino had been knocked over by the one behind it. Now every domino was being raised up again by the strength of that very same domino that had knocked it over. "Stop" was an amazing, costly, astonishing, crushing word of God. But "Stop" wasn't the last word God said. The last word God said – picking up each individual domino and turning it from an agent of the fall to an agent of resurrection – the last word God said, was "Go."

On November 8, 1997, Gordon Wilson, a 60-year-old draper from Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, and a lifelong Methodist, attended a Veterans Day ceremony at the war memorial in his home town with his daughter, Marie, a nurse. During the ceremony, a bomb planted by the Provisional IRA exploded. It was a massacre. This is how Gordon Wilson described his parting from his beloved daughter, Marie.

She held my hand tightly, and gripped me as hard as she could. She said, 'Daddy, I love you very much.' Those were her exact words to me, and those were the last words I ever heard her say... But I bear no ill will. I bear no grudge. Dirty sort of talk is not going to bring her back to life. She was a great wee lassie. She loved her profession. She was a pet. She's dead. She's in heaven and we shall meet again. I will pray for these men tonight and every night."

William Ury, *The Third Side*, 1999

The Northern Irish Troubles had been one long domino chain. Loyalist distrusted British and gerrymandered politics and society to disadvantage Nationalist; nationalist rebelled and were threatened by Loyalist; British intervened to protect Nationalist but ended up being seen as the enemy by Nationalist, whereupon the killing of Loyalist by Nationalist and Nationalist by Loyalist became an almost everyday occurrence for 20 years. Until Gordon Wilson said stop. Until Gordon Wilson said, "I bear no ill will. I bear no grudge. ... I will pray for these men tonight and every night."

As one historian [Jonathan Bardon] recounts, "No words in more than 25 years of violence in Northern Ireland had such a powerful, emotional impact." Enniskillen was the lowest moment in the whole history of the Troubles. But, because of one man's witness, because of one man's faith, because of one man's willingness to let Christ work in him when he had no strength of his own, Enniskillen became the day

when Northern Ireland began to say "Stop." And Enniskillen became the day the peace process began to say, "Go."

As we walk through Holy Week together, we see the fall. From this joyous Palm Sunday, this exuberant day of creation, a day of Hallelujah and Hosanna, we descend to the Fall: we see the falling of one domino after another, and watch each one bring the next one down and the next one and the next. And we see our own fall in the fall of each of these characters, who fall for the same reasons we do. But then we see one character say, "Stop." And we see a ton of bricks fall on top of him. But because of that "Stop," there can be a "Go." Because of the cross, there can be the resurrection. Because Gordon Wilson said what no one else had found it in them to say, people could begin to imagine peace in Ireland. Because Jesus gave himself in a cause that no one else ever could, so the dominoes are reversed, and we too may pass from death to life.

May this be a holy week for you. May it be a rediscovery of how the whole world falls. May it be a week where we draw breath as we witness the decisive One whose 'Stop' reversed the Fall, and so where we discover where in our life, where in the domino-chain of this world, we can find the strength and the courage and the wisdom to say, "Stop." And equally, when it comes to that pivotal divine 'Go', where we may become not only witnesses to the Resurrection – but agents of God's new creation in the world.

Some thoughts from Bishop Andrew

In 1552 a special prayer was added to the Prayer Book, asking for God's pity and the withdrawal of the plague. In 1603 ministers were instructed to shorten their services because of the danger of keeping people in 'thick and close assemblies'. In 1625 royal orders were issued to clergy that church services should only be held in places that were 'free and safe from infection', and that those coming from infected areas should be excluded from churches and asked to worship at home. In 1720 the government imposed a 40-day quarantine on all ships coming from affected ports.

It's curiously comforting, from time to time, to get a historical perspective on a current crisis, and I'm grateful for this one to the journal of the Prayer Book Society. It somehow reminds us that the word 'unprecedented' is seldom strictly accurate, however much we like to use it; rather that, as the grumpy author of the book of Ecclesiastes puts it, 'There is nothing new under the sun'.

As we come to the bitter-sweet rigours of Holy Week, how good to remember a glorious exception to the grumpy author's rule. For the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was indeed unprecedented, something genuinely 'new under the sun', indeed the ultimate 'new thing' to which the prophet Isaiah was given real, if partial, access. As we look to the past, it enables us to see the pandemic from a fresh perspective, with lament and hope just two sides of the same coin. As we look to the future, it enables us join with Isaac Watts in worship of our 'Help in ages past, our Hope for years to come'.
