

Reflections for 28th February 2021

2nd Sunday of Lent

The Way of the Cross

We see crosses everywhere, not just in church and in religious settings, but used in so many ways as an image and pattern all around us.

So it may surprise us to discover that the cross rarely appeared in Christian art in the first five hundred years of the life of the church, and was not depicted in a realistic way until much later.

Perhaps in those early centuries the memories and associations of what the cross meant were still too strong. In the time when Jesus lived, crucifixion was the most painful and horrific form of execution that was known, and it was also a form of public humiliation, usually reserved for rebellious slaves and criminals.

So, when we look at this week's gospel passage from Mark chapter 8, as Jesus began to spell out that the way ahead for him was the way of suffering and death, it is no surprise that Peter tried to protest and to challenge Jesus. And, remembering all that crucifixion involves and symbolises, I wonder how the disciples, and the crowd, would have felt when Jesus first spoke of the need for his disciples to:

take up their cross and follow me

The gospel is good news of forgiveness, freedom and new life, but this week we are reminded that there is also a challenge and a cost for those who will follow.

I don't know what it may mean for each one of us to 'take up our cross', but God knows the places in our lives where each one of us needs to be challenged and disturbed. And as we follow the way through these weeks of Lent, to Holy Week, and our celebration of Easter, so we may discover anew how the way of the cross is indeed the way of life and hope for us.

Revd John Waller

Almighty God,
whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain,
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:
mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,
may find it none other than the way of life and peace;
through Jesu Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

Bible readings: Genesis 17. 1-7, 15-16; Romans 4. 13-25; Mark 8. 31-38

Story: 'Jesus and the Taxman' – the story of Zacchaeus, based on Luke 19. 1-10