

## Passion Sunday

My dear Friends,

This Sunday, the fifth in Lent is known as Passion Sunday. Some say the term comes from the Greek verb meaning to suffer or the Latin term for suffering, as we remember the physical and mental pain that Jesus endured at this time. It begins the last fortnight of this reflective season and marks an increase in the solemnity of our worship and church customs. Traditionally all crosses and crucifixes are veiled in purple during this period and then unveiled at the Liturgy of the Day to be revered on Good Friday. The Cross and the Crucifix are very familiar images in our churches, St Margaret's being a cruciform Church is built in the shape of a cross. Many Christians wear crosses and crucifixes as items of jewellery, brooches and badges. Some carry them in their pockets and many Christian homes will have them on their walls, often above our beds or near our doorways.

The Holy Cross was an important symbol for the early Christians, we even have a day still, the fourteenth of September when we remember the Cross of Christ. However for those who lived at the time of Jesus the cross was the most horrible implement of torture and execution. For the devoted followers of our Lord in his earthly ministry the mere idea that the Messiah they welcomed into their lives should undergo such a fate as crucifixion was abhorrent.

In our Gospel from St John this week we have Jesus referring obliquely to his death. He talks of a grain of wheat which might fall into the ground and die but one that could bear much fruit subsequently. He expresses intimations of knowing that he will suffer. He is troubled but knows that he is placing himself in his Father's care. Jesus says "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. (John Ch 12, v 33,34). The actual mechanics of crucifixion would involve the victim being nailed to the cross on the ground before it would be made upright for all to see. These predictions would have been puzzling and frightening to Jesus' disciples then.

As we look back today with benefit of hindsight and the knowledge of what was to follow we can better understand the purposes of God in this act. We know that Jesus became a man to engage in all aspects of humanity, not only joy and happiness but also in sadness and pain. His participation in the things that people on earth experience in their daily lives at all extremes bring us closer to him as we seek to follow his example. In these coming days as we read the events of the Passion of Christ whether it is in Church or at home let us again place ourselves in our hearts and minds in the position of those who first encountered Jesus here on earth. We can make our final days of Lent this year a time to reflect and pray on the sufferings of this world but with the hope of the joys to come. We do not face these days alone. Remember Jesus' words "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour."

Best wishes and prayers

Stewart

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Vicar of Roath.