

Easter Day

My dear Friends,

Like many people I took advantage of the end of the 'stay local' rule this week. Living where we do means that five miles does not get us out of the City limits. So now we were able to travel to proper, even remote countryside. The bonus was coming upon a field of sheep with dozens of new born lambs gambolling in the Spring sunshine. It was a delightful prospect and perhaps something that in normal times we would not have gazed upon so long.

The sight reminded me of an experience that Bishop David Wilbourne told of when he was a Vicar in rural Yorkshire. He saw a shepherd looking intently for an extended period at his flock in what he thought was pastoral concern. The priest asked the shepherd what was going through his mind, he replied he was contemplating which animals he would send for slaughter. Please don't let that put you off your Easter lunch!

The image and symbol of the Lamb is very much in our worship and scripture at this time of the year. We are told that Jewish families would eat lamb at the Passover. The animals were sacrificed in the Temple and then taken by the people to their homes and eaten during the night (Exodus 12). For us we look at Christ as the fulfilment of the Passover, 'Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us', (1 Corinthians 5v7) and 'Behold the lamb of God' (John 1v29) makes Jesus the Paschal Lamb.

In the early church a symbol of a lamb with or near a cross was used to represent the sacrifice of Christ, as seen in the catacombs of San Callisto, Rome from the third century. Closer to home, at university my College principal who was a strict teetotaler had a view from his study window of a very old pub named the 'Lamb and Flag'. He could take consolation however that this is of course a symbol of the Resurrection. The flag bears the red cross of St George in most British representations but that is there not for patriotic reasons but to tell us that the sacrificed lamb of God, our Lord Jesus suffers death on the cross but escaped through his victory over death.

We recall this too at every Eucharist when we say or sing the words of the Agnes Dei, 'Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world'. We have come through this Lent maybe with feelings of sadness and anxiety because of what we have all known in this past year. Nevertheless we are given in the message of Good Friday the knowledge that God in the crucified Jesus fully engages in the sufferings of this world yet conquers all in the triumph of the Resurrection. May the new life we all have in the Risen Lord bring you and your loved ones joy, every blessing and hope for the future as we celebrate together as an Easter People.

Best wishes and prayers

Stewart

The Reverend Canon Stewart Lisk,
Vicar of Roath.