

The Second Sunday of Lent

My dear Friends,

Those of you who have been in Church recently and those at home who remember well our Lenten customs will recall that our churches are no longer decorated with flowers. Our altar frontals and hangings as well as the priests' vestments are now in deep purple. This colour is used, also worn in Advent, as a reminder that this is a solemn and thoughtful season when we look seriously at our faith. The solemnity of purple is also the colour used in our funeral services. It is also worn by priests when hearing the confessions of the devout which is also something we consider more in Lent.

Last week we recalled our Lord's forty days in the wilderness, a time of reflection, fasting and prayer. In our Gospel reading this week, Jesus is seen out and about in the district of Caesarea Philippi. He was asking his followers and those who encountered him who they thought he was. Some thought him John the Baptist, others Elijah, some a prophet. Peter alone recognises him as the Messiah. However Jesus tells them all not to tell anyone about this. He also went on to say that he would have to endure suffering, be rejected by the religious leaders, be killed and then rise again. Peter is shocked at the idea of a Messiah who might undergo suffering, this was not something they expected.

Jesus goes on to tell all those who want to become his disciples that it will not be an easy path. "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Mark Ch 8, v34). This was not just addressed to a few close friends but to a crowd of people listening. They were not just the people who knew him well and were of his kinsfolk but were strangers and maybe unlikely at first to be called to his service. A time of being away from others as Jesus spent in the desert and we are experiencing in lockdown might give us the desire and impetus to come out with renewed strength and energy to do more in the service of Christ and his Church. We know however that life will not be easy in the coming days and that we will have to continue to bear burdens of responsibility and duty to our families, friends, our work and our Church. Nevertheless if we set our mind on things divine as Jesus told Peter, he will send us his Spirit to inspire and lead us in his path. May God bless us all as we seek to follow our way through Lent.

Best wishes and prayers
Stewart

The Reverend Canon Stewart Lisk,
Vicar of Roath.