

on Good Friday we hear the story of Jesus' Passion. It is a story that ends in the death of the hero, for we do not proclaim resurrection until Easter morning. However, we know that this is not the final end, that it is not a story of defeat but of triumph. The final chapter awaits us. On Ash Wednesday, at the beginning of the 40 days of Lent, we were reminded that we will die. At the end of the 40 days we are reminded that we will live. The resurrection of Christ is a promise of our own. We will die and rise to eternal life.

The resurrection challenges our modern thinking on many levels. It defies scientific definition. From the first proclamation it was considered to be "foolishness" (Luke 24.11, 1 Cor. 1.18ff) and a stumbling block to faith. And yet there were also those who were convinced that Christ was present with them in a way that could be experienced if not proven. Their cry "Christ is risen!" has echoed down the centuries: "He is risen indeed!" It is a cry we now take up, as we rejoice in the promise of eternal life.

Sunday: John 11.17-27 *The promise of resurrection*

Monday: Luke 24.1-9 *The resurrection of Jesus*

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 15.3-8 *Witnesses to the resurrection*

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 15.12-22 *All will be made alive*

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 1.18-25 *We proclaim Christ crucified*

Friday: 1 Peter 1.3-9 *A living hope*

Saturday: Colossians 3.1-4 *The new life in Christ*

Pray · That God will transform our lives by his risen power, to bear witness to his life and love

Prayer for Easter

Almighty, everlasting God, on this day you conquered death through your Son and opened for us the path to eternal life. And so we celebrate in joy the feast of his resurrection. Make us new through your Spirit, so that we too may rise and walk in the light of life. We ask this through Jesus Christ.

(from "Show Me The Way" by Henri Nouwen)



Easter Prayer Leaflet 2015

Coolangatta Q 4225

Dear Friends,

Epiphany has just passed as I begin to write this, and it seems a little premature to be thinking about Easter already - a bit like putting hot cross buns into the supermarkets at the beginning of January! My chosen theme of "Dying and Rising" seems equally inappropriate considering we have just finished celebrating Christ's birth. And yet we have a premonition of what lies ahead in the gifts of the Magi to the baby Jesus: gold for his kingship, frankincense for his holiness and for prayer, and myrrh for his suffering and death. The hot cross buns already in our shops carry this same sign of suffering and death, and so while we may be annoyed to see them being sold so early, they can serve to prepare us for Ash Wednesday which reinforces this sense of our mortality and then leads us on to the promise of new life in our rising again.

In this prayer leaflet I want to explore some of the ways in which we die and rise in a metaphorical sense. We die to sin and are made alive to God, we die and rise in baptism, we die to ourselves each time we choose to put aside our own desires and agendas and to follow in Christ's way, we die like a grain of wheat and are transformed by God to achieve our full potential, and finally we die in our mortal bodies and are raised to eternal life with Christ.

When we were in New Zealand in November we visited the buried village of Te Wairoa which was covered in ash in the eruption of Mt Tarawera in 1886. Miraculously, after all the

devastation, fence posts which had been almost completely buried in ash sprouted and grew into huge trees. These rows of trees were recently cut down, but are still sprouting new shoots to this day. In all our dying and rising this Lent, may we bear witness to God's life force within us, which can never be quenched.

Love and prayers,
Sue



Daily Prayer for Lent

Saviour God, in Christ's dying and rising you offer us the possibility of a new beginning.

Your forgiveness raises us to freedom from sin,
your love transforms us and raises us up to be your people,
your life raises us from death.

In our own dying and rising may we glorify you as Christ did, and in doing so bear witness to the power of your life and love, for his name's sake. Amen.

Week 5 : DYING AND RISING IN FAITH

Faith is challenged by life's circumstances. Sometimes the God we thought we knew and believed in does not act in accordance with our beliefs and we begin to question and even to doubt. We are brought low. God appears to be absent. Faith dims. But God is always there. Trust goes hand in hand with faith. With the exception of Psalm 88, the psalms of lament (about one-third of the Psalter) always end with an expression of trust, usually based on past experience, that God will act - in God's own way and in God's own time. So the psalmist ends his lament with a recommitment to God. He dies and rises in faith.

Dying and rising in faith leads us to new insights and a new understanding of God. We never have all the answers but remain learners, students, disciples. Our faith must continue to grow and develop for it is a living thing, not a fossil set hard in resin. God is always creating, always doing new and often unexpected things. When our faith is challenged we must look to our past experience of God, and for the hand of God working in ways unknown to us, yet always for our welfare.

Sunday: Psalm 13 *Dying and rising in faith*

Monday: Job 42.1-6 *New insights gained through suffering*

Tuesday: Mark 9.20-27 *Faith challenged; faith confirmed*

Wednesday: John 20.24-29 *Thomas dies and rises in faith*

Thursday: Acts 9.1-19a *Paul's new insight into Jesus*

Friday: John 4.5-26 *A Samaritan women's new insight into Jesus*

Saturday: Jeremiah 29.11-14 *I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord*

Pray • That challenges to our faith will lead to renewed trust
• For all who suffer and are persecuted for their faith

Daily Prayer for Lent

Week 6 : DYING AND RISING TO ETERNAL LIFE

The last week of Lent is Holy Week. On Palm Sunday and again

Week 4 : THE DYING AND RISING OF A GRAIN OF WHEAT

To die to self does not mean that we cease to exist, or lose our sense of ourselves or our personal power. God has created us for a special purpose which no-one else can fulfil because no-one else has the unique blend of personality and abilities that we have. To become so subservient to others that we are swallowed up by their demands and desires does not glorify God. We glorify God by being transformed into what God created us to be, by the power of the Spirit. A grain of wheat disappears into the earth and is transformed. Only in its dying is its full potential realised. In his dying Jesus released the full potential of God's purposes for all his people. In dying to self, we release God's power to transform us.

Jesus told many stories about seeds and harvests. God is looking for a harvest among his people. The grain of wheat dies. On its own it can do nothing but in its dying and rising God produces an abundant harvest. The branch on the vine can produce nothing if it is severed from the main trunk. So it is with us. Without God we cannot produce anything that will last. But if we remain rooted in God and allow God to work in our lives, God can produce more than we could ever do on our own, more than we could dream or imagine.

Sunday: John 12.20-26 *The grain of wheat dies*

Monday: John 15.4-8 *The vine and the branches*

Tuesday: Galatians 5.22-26 *The fruit of the Spirit*

Wednesday: Philippians 1.3-11 *The harvest of righteousness*

Thursday: Mark 4.26-32 *Parables about growth and harvest*

Friday: Colossians 1.9-14 *Bearing fruit in every good work*

Saturday: Ephesians 3.14-21 *More than we can ask or imagine*

Pray • That God will strengthen our resolve to serve him

• That our lives may bear a rich harvest for God

Daily Prayer for Lent

Week 1 : DYING TO SIN AND ALIVE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

Shrove Tuesday officially ends the season of Epiphany and marks the beginning of Lent. We refer to it as "Pancake Day", the last day for celebration and feasting before the abstinence and fasting of Lent. But Shrove Tuesday was traditionally seen as a day of repentance. "Shrove Tuesday" is derived from the word "shrive", which means to confess and receive absolution. Lent begins with confession and forgiveness. On Ash Wednesday we are marked with ash and affirm our mortality, recognising that we are frail human beings dogged by our sins, however much we struggle against them. In a very moving book called "Weep Not For Me", author Geoffrey Howard reflects on Jesus' falling under the weight of the cross on the way to Calvary. He writes: *"The burden is not only too great for me to bear, it is too great even for him. The first time I became aware of this, I vowed never to sin again. The vow, like a New Year's resolution, was not long kept and I fell again."*

I am encouraged to know that St Paul had the same experience. "Wretched man that I am!" he writes in Romans 7.24. "Who will rescue me from this body of death?" And then he gives the answer. "Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Only God can lift us up and set us on our feet again, so that we can be raised up to a new beginning.

Sunday: 2 Corinthians 5.20b-6.2 *Be reconciled to God*

Monday: Matthew 9.2-8 *Get up! Your sins are forgiven*

Tuesday: Colossians 2.13-15 *Dead in sin but alive in Christ*

Wednesday: John 8.3-11 *Condemnation and forgiveness*

Thursday: Romans 7.15-25 *The struggle against sin*

Friday: Luke 18.9-14 *How do we stand before God?*

Saturday: Psalm 103.1-5, 8-14 *God knows of what we are made*

Pray • Rejoice in God's forgiveness

• Pray for those who do not know the forgiveness of God

Daily Prayer for Lent

Week 2 : DYING AND RISING IN BAPTISM

The gospel reading for the First Sunday in Lent is Mark's account of Jesus' baptism and temptation in the wilderness. Thus the 40 days begin with baptism. Jesus' baptism is also the gospel reading for the First Sunday after Epiphany. The baptism of John was for repentance, a ritual which needed to be repeated, just as we need regular showers to remove the dirt from our bodies. Christian baptism is deeper, more meaningful, a ritual we need undergo only once because it signifies a new birth of water and the Spirit. This was Nicodemus's dilemma (John 3). Nicodemus was thinking of human birth but Jesus was referring to the new birth that comes with our baptism. We are now more than mortal human beings; we are reborn into the beloved children of God!

Baptism by full immersion demonstrates this most clearly. As the person being baptised goes down under the water it is like drowning or death. As the person comes up again the waters break like the breaking of the waters in birth. Here is a new creation! St Paul sees baptism into Christ as baptism into Christ's death. If we share in Christ's death we will also share in Christ's life. In baptism, then, we die and rise.

Sunday: Mark 1.4-8 *The people confess and John baptises*

Monday: Mark 1.9-15 *Jesus is revealed in his baptism*

Tuesday: Acts 19.1-7 *Baptism into Jesus is something different*

Wednesday: 1 Peter 3.18-22 *Saved through baptism and Christ's resurrection*

Thursday: Romans 6.3-11 *Dying and rising with Christ*

Friday: John 3.1-8 *Born of water and the Spirit*

Saturday: 2 Corinthians 5.14-17 *A new creation*

Pray • Rejoice that we are born again children of God
• For all the baptised, that we may be faithful to our baptism vows

Daily Prayer for Lent

Week 3 : DYING AND RISING TO SELF

One of the gospel readings for the Second Sunday in Lent is Jesus' prediction of his own dying and rising (Mark 8.31-38). Peter will hear none of this and Jesus has to take him aside and speak sternly to him: "Get behind me, Satan!" It is not that Jesus is turning his back on Peter; rather he is teaching him that the correct place for a disciple is following behind the master, not in front and leading the way. How often do we all want to do that - to set the course of our own lives, to follow our own agendas and to make our own decisions? Peter is being asked to die to this human tendency and rise to the ways of God. It is a continuing lesson for a disciple of Christ and one that is often hard learned, for God's ways are not our ways.

Jesus shared our humanity. I don't imagine he wanted to walk the road to the cross any more than Peter did. But Jesus lived his life in total unity with God's will. In the wilderness temptations at the beginning of the Jesus story, he refused any way but God's way. In the Garden of Gethsemane he struggled with what lay ahead, but God's will prevailed and he walked on in obedience and faith. He died to self and rose to God. This is what it means for us to take up our cross. It means to deny ourselves and to follow Christ, whatever struggle this may involve. This is the path of a disciple. It is the way to life.

Sunday: Mark 8. 31-36 *The way of a disciple*

Monday: Isaiah 55.6-11 *God's way are not our ways*

Tuesday: Ephesians 4.17-24 *The old and the new*

Wednesday: Luke 14.25-33 *The cost of discipleship*

Thursday: Psalm 25.4-10 *Show me your ways, O Lord*

Friday: John 12.27-32 *Glorifying God by following God's way*

Saturday: Luke 22.39-42 *Not my will but yours be done*

Pray • That we might seek God's will in everything we do
• That our choices might bring glory to God

Daily Prayer for Lent