

Introduction to Good Friday Meditations, St Mary's Walberton. YouTube available from 9am, 10 April 2020

This hour will be divided into three sections of roughly 20 minutes. I will read a short passage from John 19, vv17 to 37, and then lead a meditation. There will then be a period of reflection and silent prayer, after which I will say a prayer, before moving on to the next meditation. At the end of the hour, if possible, continue the quiet, reflective atmosphere at home.

It has been said that the heart of prayer is attention, being awake before God, radically open to all that God is and offers to us.

Prayer involves waiting, lovingly and trustingly. Indeed, during the period of Lent, as we have denied ourselves and disciplined ourselves to wait on God in a more focussed way, we have moved a little closer, step by step, to the God who waits and longs to have our attention.

So now we will take a few moments before beginning these meditations to quieten ourselves. Let us make sure we are sitting in a comfortable position, with back straight, feet resting on the floor, and hands comfortably resting on our laps. Relaxing, and breathing deeply in and out, let us with each breath breathe out the tensions and anxieties which swirl around our bodies and minds, and let us breathe in the goodness and love of God.

Lord, I surrender to you all my anxieties and burdens, my hopes and my responsibilities.

I give you my full attention; help me simply to wait upon you, to trust you, to rest in you.

In the depths of my being I become quiet and still; I wait for you, the God of my salvation.....

To help us focus on the cross, I have an icon of Jesus on the cross to which I will refer from time to time. It is from Russia, written/ painted around 1600. You may like to continue looking at it in the quiet spaces during this hour.

The icon shows Christ lifted up on the Cross. **"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all people to myself"**, Jesus had declared (John 12 v32).

Take a few moments to look at the picture... To the right at the foot of the cross, we see John, the "disciple whom Jesus loved", grief stricken and weeping for his dear friend who is suffering and dying. Behind John is a Roman soldier, possibly the centurion who declared Jesus to be the Son of God. On the left we see Mary, Jesus' mother, her face sombre and dark with grief, and behind her one of the other women, both pointing towards Jesus, in recognition of the saving work he is now fulfilling on the cross. Behind the cross we see the city walls of Jerusalem.

Tradition has it that Jesus' crucifixion took place at the site where Adam, the first human, was buried. Thus many icons show the cross rising above the cave where the first Adam lay. The icon expresses in visual form the faith that **"As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"**, and echoes Jesus' words **"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all people to myself."**