

## Holy Week

***Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written,  
'I will strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' Matthew 26:31***

Dear friends,

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

We are in Passiontide, and about to begin Holy Week, when we follow the Lord to Jerusalem and participate in the events that lead us inexorably to Calvary. We see the disciples- the Lord's friends and followers- disperse in the face of brute force, the energy of their fear scattering them, on this dark night of betrayal, as Jesus is taken away for summary trial and execution. But this diaspora – this scattering- began rather earlier. John tells us that in the face of the uncompromising teaching of Jesus, many of those who followed Jesus simply walked away, unable to swallow (you will forgive the deliberate wordplay) the Lord's words that, unless they eat and drink the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, they have no life in them (John 6:53). Those who cannot ingest those words, scatter like chaff. We see that when the company of would be disciples has thinned out, Peter and some of the others remain. Jesus asks whether they too want to leave him, and Simon Peter, with tremendous poignancy, says, " Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68). Peter knows, in the depths of his soul, that he is in the presence of the life-giver- and yet we know that he- redoubtable, passionate, Peter- will later have a failure of nerve, and give way to the disintegration of fear. When the shepherd is struck, the sheep are scattered.

But there will be another scattering of apostles. The very same gospel from which the words above are quoted ends with what is known as the Great Commission. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to

observe all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20. This is, we might say, a fruitful scattering- to mix metaphors, the one Good Shepherd has made other shepherds, other pastors, to bring in the scattered flock of humanity.

My brothers and sisters, we may feel ourselves to have been dispersed over the past year- though, thanks be to God- we have been beautifully aware of and thankful for our essential unity in Christ; but now is the time to return, as the Church enjoins us- to enter into, once again, the mystery of Christ’s Passion, his death and resurrection.

Let me encourage you to come to worship and to fellowship, whether online, to the many acts of devotion we are offering, or in person, for morning prayer on Good Friday at St Laurence, the Holy Eucharist on Easter Sunday at St Mary’s, or the praise service in the Molson Garden afterwards.

With what pure delight we shall be able to sing out on Easter Day, “ He is risen indeed, alleluia!”

With love and prayers,

Fr Keith