

The Christian Community

MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL
Forest Row Congregation

Newsletter for Palm Sunday, 5th April 2020

What is happening at The Christian Community?

All public events have been cancelled because of the new Coronavirus. We are sending out a weekly newsletter with spiritual guidance and study material by post and email.

The priests are celebrating the Act of Consecration of Man at the times indicated on the programme. In Holy Week, it will be celebrated daily at 10am from Palm Sunday, 5th April, until Easter Monday, 13th April. Please join us in spirit.

The priests are available for pastoral conversations by phone or to give advice about where to find practical help.

For more information about The Christian Community, please see our website (<http://www.thechristiancommunity.co.uk>)

Opening Letter

What is a church of The Christian Community? A place where a spirit is housed - the spirit or angel of the congregation. This angel comprises all those who bring themselves to it in any degree of earnestness. It is the collective spirit of these souls.

What happens when the church is somehow taken from us, closed? The angel must then find expression through the individuals, in their lives. When the angel of the congregation is represented at the altar, it turns around to face the congregation at several points, and proclaims that 'Christ (is) in you'. It is a precious and world-changing moment, so important that it is repeated again and again. The great spirit does not dwell purely in the church, beautiful place though that is for our seeking souls. Nor is it remote in the heavens. The Christ is in us. We can, in all humility, recognise this, and allow it to unfold as kindness and selflessness in us. We can make a space for it, and see where it takes us.

At the last Little Ones' Gathering that I held, I told the story of the Root Children by Sibylle von Olfers. In nature's cycle, the little root children (flowers) sleep through Winter, and begin to prepare at this time of year by making their blossom's beautiful colours whilst still underground. They sew the blossoms out of delicate ethereal colours and material. Then, when they are ready, and the sun has warmed the trees and teased out the first leaves from their hibernation, they ascend and walk out into the bright sunshine in a procession of beautiful colours.

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Perhaps we must consciously go 'back to our roots' this year, 'back to basics'. A church is a wonderful thing that we inevitably, like all other things, often take for granted. When we do not have this, then we must go deep into ourselves, like those root children, and through hard inner work produce beautiful inner soul colours in our thoughts, colours which are akin to the delicate blossom.

Flowers – are they the living thoughts of God, with a language we barely understand or notice? Perhaps in this time when we are forced into a subterranean soul existence, we can produce thoughts which help to light up the world; which might bring true human beauty into the world, a world 'which has been groaning with pain in waiting for this time' (Romans 8:22).

Let us bring this underground intensity of activity to our living with Holy Week this week. Just as the roots are pushing to transform into leaf and stem, and drive themselves through the earth – let our inner spirit be teased out by the warmth of goodness. Let us become an underground movement! Let us worthily find the powers within us to house the Holy Week and Easter in our souls, if the church may not house them, and endeavour to fulfil them within.

With warm greetings, Luke Barr

Participating in the Act of Consecration of Man

It is a huge sacrifice not to be able to attend the Act of Consecration of Man. We are aware how hard this is for our members. Although the priests are privileged in that we can continue to celebrate alone, we also feel a huge loss; only the awareness that members are with us in spirit stops the church from feeling 'empty'.

We have been asked whether we can give some more guidance for those who wish to take part inwardly. Of course, everyone needs to find their own way of doing this, just as we all find our own way of relating to the service. What follows could be modified and built on.

First of all, we can be aware of the times when the service is celebrated: 9am on Thursday and Friday and 10am on Sunday most weeks; in Holy Week every day at 10am. If on a particular day we want to join in the celebration of the Act of Consecration, it's good to put this date in our diary, just as if we were going to church. We can switch off the phone, gently close our door and ask others not to disturb us.

Then it can be useful to feel the difference between preparation and participation. We may at other times be reading and studying the gospels and Creed, or working with the thoughts in Perspectives or in these newsletters. We can think of all this as our preparation for the service.

When we actually sit down to take part in the service, we can give it a different quality. Before we start, we let all the thoughts and feelings of our preparation fade away. We can light a candle. As we do so, we might recall the lighting of the candles on the altar in the church.

The first 'act' could be to think of those with whom we are together:

- Other members of the congregation, who may be turning to the service in this hour;
- Those 'true Christians' who seek to hallow the human, whatever religious or spiritual 'badge' they might wear
- Those who have died, whose aid streams towards us from beyond the threshold;
- The angelic beings (see the first article on the Act of Consecration of Man in last week's newsletter)

Then we could read the gospel of the week aloud. If we have studied the passage in advance, our reading will be all the fuller. Reading aloud helps us to experience the gospel as an event.

We can read the Creed aloud with the feeling that this is our response to the gospel reading.

We could follow the further course of the service in soul-gestures. For example, after reading the Creed, we could ask ourselves:

- What do I want to get free of? What blockages and hindrances stop me from being aligned with my true self and through that with reality itself?
- What do I want to give back? What gifts to I want to pass on?

We might visualise the chalice standing on the altar as place where all this will flow in an inner mood of offering.

Moving on into the realm of the Transubstantiation, we could recall a moment when the being of Christ and the spiritual world became utterly real for us, for example:

- In the service itself, perhaps when we received the bread and wine;
- In our life of prayer and meditation;
- In oneness with nature or with some great task.

We could then pray the Lord's Prayer aloud.

As we reach the Communion, we might think of the path that will lead us out of this holy time and back into life. Everything that we have experienced wants to flow through us into our daily life and into the world. We might think of areas of the world that need the healing power of Christ, lifting them up tenderly in our thoughts and sending peace towards them.

It is good to be conscious how we draw this time to a close. We can extinguish the candle and leave a few moments for all the experiences to resound in our soul, before we carry on with our day.

The Act of Consecration of Man will be celebrated every day in Holy Week at 10am.

Palm Sunday 5th April: Matthew 21:1-11; Monday 6th April: Mark 11:12-25; Tuesday 7th April: Luke 21:5-38; Wednesday 8th April: Matthew 26:3-16; Maundy Thursday 9th April: Luke 23:13-32; Good Friday 10th April: John 19:1-27; Holy Saturday 11th April: John 19:28-42; Easter Sunday 12th April: Mark 16:1-9.

Homily

Many pictures of Palm Sunday show Jesus riding with utter peace through the crowds who are showing very different reactions to the event.

Some have clearly gone into a kind of ecstasy, climbing trees and throwing down branches and their clothes in front of him. Others are frowning, suspicious and threatened.

In the middle of the picture, we see Jesus silently beholding what is going on. He holds up his hand in a gesture of blessing that seems to radiate from his heart. This gesture of silently beholding becomes ever stronger through the days of Holy Week, until he stands silently before Pontius Pilate in the trial.

Our lives expose us to extremes both within and outside of us. We know the feeling of ecstasy – how attractive it can feel to give away our independence and the pain of making decisions and lose ourselves in the intoxication of a new friend, a new idea, or even a new leader.

On the other hand, we know the attraction of shutting down all hope and idealism in cynical rejection. Far safer to be sure I know that I'm right and that the world is disappointing, than to take the risk of trusting that something new could happen; that things could be different.

When we notice how these extremes are at work in us, we can find a tender space in our middle. This space of unknowing, of questioning is the space where love for others can unfold. Our emptiness becomes the pathway for Christ to enter our soul.

TR

Holy Week

We were intending this year in Holy Week to offer a series of daily talks on the theme of the Wound. Pearl, Tom & I were going to prepare these talks, and initial discussions with the Eurythmist Glenys Waters began to create a picture of a Eurythmy contribution in the same vein as last year's extraordinary performances.

The talks cannot go ahead this year, and cannot be replaced by essays; and podcasts are not available to so many. So we have decided to produce an outline of what we had prepared for Holy Week, with reference to our remarkable current situation, and to the wound.

The sun shines down on the events of Palm Sunday, the entry into Jerusalem. But it is the old sun, the entropic sun of the 'dying earth existence' as it says in the Creed. It is a sun which will one day run its course. The feeling amongst humanity at that time was that humanity shared the sun's fate. Why did they feel that? And why is that so special, as it is so widespread and not unusual today?

The first philosophical thinking was a thinking which detached itself from the world and from the life of the world, and it consequently felt dead. We no longer dreamily saw the gods and the spirit world, as once we had, and as we remembered them in mythological pictures. Those pictures had been marvellously alive, as anyone can feel when we encounter them today. Now our consciousness began to feel no longer alive as once it had. This was a huge trauma for the peoples of the time. Religion and strict adherence to rituals and forms were an attempt to maintain the bridge to the spirit world.

Humanity was developing more and more towards individual experience, rather than collective group-experience. But this increasing sense of self went hand in hand with an increasing sense of the strange annihilation of this self, an increasing awareness and fear of death. Being a self brings with it the temptation of egoism - that I value this Self (my continual and sole point of reference) above all else. Experiencing the pain and loss that death brings brought us the temptation of succumbing to fear - fear of the emptiness that remains with loss, and fear of pain.

These two things, egoism and fear, are arguably the source of humanity's deep wound. We can sense them again and again in our lives. They are the wounds that arose in the mythological picture of Adam and Eve's biting into the apple. 'Their eyes were opened', like wounds. They became aware of themselves ('knowledge of good and evil' - as no newborn possesses); and of fear: Adam says to God, "I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid..."

These quasi-mythological pictures give a precise account of the genesis of our wound whose origins are in our supersensible nature.

We wounded the apple with our bite, and we in turn became wounded. Our Earth was like an apple: the marvellous fruit of a ripening process in the spiritual cosmos. We plucked and separated the apple of consciousness from its entirety embedded in the world-tree. We bit into the world with our ever more acute consciousness. We began to consume that which we should not; and we in turn, began to be consumed - with fear, envy, hate.

All the wounds that we carry, most of which we no longer where they come from, have a deep connection to fear and egoism. The egoism of others who have created the wound in us; and the fear that lived in them as they perpetrated this wound. We carry our wounds - and wound others in turn. We lived and continue to live in a vicious circle of wounding and being wounded. It is the old wound that we still carry, the original wound of humanity which first arose in humanity's beginnings. It is a wound which is constantly open and vulnerable.

This was the situation in earthly existence, when something intervened in this vicious circle. The appearance of Christ takes place in earthly space and time.

The life of Christ on earth can be understood as a healing of this wound. From the beginning, his activity is marked by healing infirmities in body and in soul. The healing flows almost without his needing to direct it (as we see in the woman who touched his robe and was healed Mark 5:25-30). And yet it cannot heal everyone, while it is limited to the merely physical.

We can see Holy Week as marking out the journey of healing humanity's old wounds with a new wound, a wound that will redeem the old one.

How does this new wound manifest? How does it heal? The Christian story re-emerges in the last days of the Medieval world in the well-known story of Parzival and the mysterious Grail. It was the last fruit of an earlier age which we were given to help us enter the modern onlooker consciousness that we all now well know.

Parzival is unable to heal at first the wounded Fisher King of the Grail castle. He can only look on and wonder. He has been taught that it is polite and good just to look on. It is when he returns from many experiences, and following his vital encounter with the hermit on Good Friday, that he now knows how to heal the wounded king. He must ask him, with authentic loving empathy, what it is that causes him pain.

He receives no answer. The question has been enough. It reverses the magic spell of the wound. The king recovers, the land is restored to health.

In our day and age, when we are such onlookers to life, living into an increasing threat of 'virtual realities', we can find that in human connectivity, in human empathy, in human communion with one another, we can find the redeeming power of Christ working in us. We may prefer to use the word 'love' instead of Christ. But anyone who has allowed the beautiful consonants of the word 'Christ' to pass across their lips with a feeling of openness and reverence, can sense that Christ is the holy word for love, a word we should utter only when we mean it.

Was there not this power of love before Golgotha? It is difficult to say - but we might live with the idea that this gift of empathy and love, is just that: a gift that has come relatively recently to humanity. Very possibly, our love before that was purely blood based: family, tribal, occasionally interrupted by the drama of lust. Can we imagine life without the gifts of empathy and love for another, no matter who they are? The lack of warmth, the lack of joy and connectivity with others?

In the eminently Christian legend of Parzival, it is this connection with each other, this communion which restores the land to health - that is: a more human culture will heal our world, ecologically and spiritually.

We can take the time in Holy Week to deepen our experience of this capacity for love in us - so that we might use it as an Easter gift for a world which will someday soon be returning from an extraordinarily long and existential Passiontide.

LB

Show your wound – Joseph Beuys

The program for Holy Week begins with a banner heading quoting the artist Joseph Beuys' words Show Your Wound. This was the title of more than one piece of work, work which was never meant to be an illustration of a particular event or trauma. Rather it was the locating of individual and collective trauma. For him to turn to the wound was not to be overwhelmed by catastrophe. For him to turn to the wound was to turn to the place not only of woundedness but also of healing and transformation. Beuys felt the time he was living in demanded that art would need to become more than art for art's sake. After the Second World War he himself suffered a depression and a nervous breakdown. The collective trauma of war, the Shoah, the cold war, the retreat into materialism and the numbing out of memories that was part of the German response to its recent and unbearable past was for him a kind of spiritual execution. One sided materialism, the numbing of pain and

silencing of questions was destroying the capacity of the individual to become their deepest selves. Without this self becoming, without the courage to go to the most vulnerable and wounded part of their soul the artist would not be able to connect with the place of healing, the place in which we can reimagine the world.

Perhaps the most powerful expressions of this gesture can be seen in the life and work of the British writer and peace activist Vera Brittain. In 1914 she and her dearest friends were drawn into the seductive lie of the nobility of war. When the war ended nearly everyone she loved had died for what was then revealed as a hollow illusion. To try to express this experience of betrayal was to become a pariah and in being silenced her depression deepened into something so profound that her life became unbearable.

Miraculously a young woman and friend, Winifrid Holtby had the empathy to hear and behold her pain. In being able to show her wound she was able to draw back from the brink of madness and write her experiences down in a book called Testament of Youth. This book became the voice of a generation and even future generations who experienced their own betrayals. They were able to experience: what happened to you happened to me too. The sharing and the showing of the wound resulted not in alienation but in the overcoming of alienation. This story makes concrete what Beuys meant when he said to locate the wound, to make visible the pain is not to be overwhelmed by catastrophe but to connect with the place of healing and transformation.

The role of the artist is often one of truth-teller. Their fate can be to be marginalised and silenced if this truth is too painful. It was for this reason Beuys coined the term Social Sculpture. He wanted to make a visual vocabulary of forms and substance where the artist could inspire us to overcome our dread and fear of the wound. In showing and sharing the wound we respond and response becomes responsibility. What does this mean? For Beuys the reality of Christ was the reality of the realised individual. This individual was an ethical individual who gives up their narrow individualism for something greater. In this way response becomes a new kind of ethical aesthetic. Empathy for the pain of the world means the artist starts to reimagine the world; to bring about new forms and new ways of being as fruits of that engagement with that which is usually hidden, ignored and denied. Beuys fostered the idea of personal autonomy and agency. It is very important that the professional artist was not the only authority because he believed everyone was an artist in that everyone had the capacity to reimagine the world. In inviting us to show our wound he is inviting us all to find a way to talk to each other in the spirit of connectedness, in the spirit of creativity. The work of art he was hoping we would make was both ourselves and a new world.

Deborah Ravetz

The Prayers for Lent, Passiontide and Holy Week

Seven weeks before Easter, we hear the gospel of renunciation: the story of the rich young man in Luke 18. The one who has great riches has to learn the Lenten lesson: the only way that we can become open for the reality of the spirit is by embracing emptiness without any guarantees.

Four weeks before Easter, Passiontide begins. The seasonal prayer addresses the human being directly: O Man! The spiritual world speaks to us as those who mourn a great loss. The words recall the Sermon on the Mount:

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Comfort is not cosy. In the Greek text the word is connected to the Paraclete, the bringer of truth. Sometimes, true comfort comes from confronting our situation in its full reality. This is the comfort which the Passiontide prayer offers us.

We hear that the 'place' of our heart is empty. See the place where they laid him! is the message of the angel to the women who have come to the tomb to mourn on Easter morning. This is the pivotal

moment in the Easter story, which echoes on in the Easter Act of Consecration when the empty heart has been filled and it is the grave which is empty. In an earlier time, human beings experienced particular places, where the spiritual forces in nature were at work, as sacred. Even in our secular age, it can feel important to mark the place where a life ended with flowers and pictures. Perhaps this feeling is connected to an intuition that the new life that will start beyond the grave will still be connected to the place of the earthly experiences.

Could the place of the heart be empty because an old heart has passed away? Could it be important to attend to that space because the new, spiritual heart that is forming, will be connected to that place?

Humanity is mourning. Never has this been truer than now, when the focus falls on those who are dying or losing loved ones. This is not to diminish the pain of the many bereavements that happen every day, every year. However, this year, the focus of humanity is concentrated on these deaths in a singular way. There is a deeper mourning that has been going on for a longer time, though. Joanna Macey discovered that she could not really help her clients in psychotherapy without addressing the deep sorrow that many of them felt about the fate of the earth. None of our problems are merely personal any more. The Covid-19 virus could very well be a product of the shadow-side of our globalised world. Social and ecological stress created the perfect conditions for the virus to cross species. Investment decisions by bankers in the West changed patterns of farming in China and contributed to the problem.

At the root of our mourning is the loss of the Spirit as a living source of rejuvenation in our culture. There is a first flush of enthusiasm, of energy and inspiration in any undertaking: as Hermann Hesse said, every beginning has its magic. The same applies to cultures and even civilisations. Our culture, which flowed from a spiritual source, is no longer connected to its founding impulses. This bitter cognition is the necessary first step towards the decision to find a new relationship to the Spirit in freedom.

The mournful emptiness of not knowing, bearing the tension between hope and grieving, prepares us for the new which wants to be born. When we fall into one of the extremes, they harden into something that cannot help us: hope becomes expectation whilst grieving can harden into grievance. This Passiontide, it feels as if the world is meeting the challenge of mournful awaiting, navigating between the extremes of impatience and despair.

The Spirit addresses us directly once more in the prayer for Holy Week: O Man. Now, the place of the heart is burning. What flames flicker in the empty heart-space? Perhaps flames of feverish intoxication, of rage and indignation. Once again, our current situation gives us a special access to the existential reality of Passiontide. We can feel extremes within opening up within ourselves: on the one hand, an almost hysterical fixation on the news that bombards us; on the other, cynicism and suspicion that shut out the human reality. In ourselves and around us we can sense the listlessness and passionate intensity that Yeats prophesied in his poem *The Second Coming*. Flames of hysteria and indignation have no power truly to warm us. Only the self-responsible human I can ignite with a different fire – with the warmth that we will hear about in the Easter prayers.

The step from Passiontide to Holy Week brings inwardness: the sense of wanting in the first prayer has become sorrow; longing for the spirit has become hope. The prayer ends with the shattering statement that hope lies in a grave which shines like a counter-image to the sun, radiating grief.

Throughout the four weeks before Easter, we hear a prayer after the Creed. In this, we address the Spirit, who is at work in the great world and in also in everyday life, asking that he might not look at the 'sting of evil' in our heart. Can we imagine that the Spirit would agree to this request? Its very impossibility echoes Adam's attempt to hide in the bushes, when awareness of his separateness from God leads to his fantasy that anything could be hidden from the ultimate ground of reality. Asking the Spirit not to look is an acknowledgement that there is something in ourselves that we do not wish to confront. This is the 'sting of evil' in our hearts. Any process of self-examination reveals

that there are forces at work in us that we generally don't include in our picture of ourselves. What happens when our gorge rises in indignation; when we find ourselves locked into patterns of domination and submission; or when we find ourselves manipulating situations to our own benefit? This is the realm that we can think of when we prepare to take part in the Offering, when we think of our straying from the one true Ground of the World, our denials of his being and our weaknesses.

The experience of loss and bitter self-cognition leads to a kind of collapse. The self has lost its capacity to stand; it lies 'lamenting on the ground'. We find ourselves in company with human beings from the earliest times.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily... My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin. (Psalm 102)

In the final words of the prayer, we ask the Spirit to give our paralysed self the power of resurrection. Every year, we can feel the power of these words as they bear on our individual path. This year, they resonate with the experience of the whole of humanity. - TR

Act of Consecration (2)

Trinity

I recall the three crosses that we make in the service, when we call on the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As we make the signs, we call on the Trinity to be in us, create in us and to bring enlightenment to us.

In my imagination I peel away everything that covers over being itself like the layers of an onion. Even the great mountain ranges, often seen as symbols of eternity, are in fact continually growing and passing away. What lies beneath all becoming, beneath all change and growth? The ultimate ground of all being is the Father-God. I fill my soul with gratitude for this secure foundation, which gives me security in all the events of my life. I think of the beings of the First Hierarchy, who are the instruments of the divine will in establishing being.

I direct my attention to the forces that keep me alive, which lie far beneath my conscious control. I look back on my life. Everything that I am now is bound up with the mystery of my development, of my becoming. What kind of world would it be if there were no becoming? I thank the Son-God for this gift, which comes from his continuous, creative activity. The Spirits of Movement, Wisdom and Form are his coworkers in creation.

I become aware of the gift of my consciousness, without which this contemplation would be impossible. I notice how rich my experience can be when I succeed in paying attention to the things that I see and the people I meet. I become aware that the connections that arise from this attention are the gift of the Holy Spirit. I pray that the Holy Spirit may continue to enlighten me. Angels, Archangels and Archai work within individual destinies, the histories of peoples and the history of humanity so that insight may come about. They are the agents of the Holy Spirit.

Having pondered on these thoughts, which are themselves a starting point for many further ones, I may find that that the mood of prayer stays with me. Finally, I let everything fade away. Into the silence I hear the words being spoken that accompany the three crosses.

- TR. This is the second in a series of articles.

Gospel Study on Matthew 21

In Holy Week, the divine Logos finally enters the physical nature of the human being, culminating in the torture of his execution, which draws him into the closest imaginable union with it.

Palm Sunday is the climax of the long journey that Jesus has made from Caesarea Philippi to the north of Galilee (Matt 16) towards Jerusalem. Throughout Matthew, the question of Jesus' identity is being worked out. We need to remember that Jesus' followers and the earliest Christians, like Matthew, were still groping towards an understanding of what they had experienced with Jesus. Concepts like the Trinity and Salvation were only discovered through the first four centuries. So when Matthew begins his gospel with the genealogy that traces Jesus' royal descent back to David, Matthew is demonstrating that Jesus is the longed for king of Israel – 'the Son of David'. Psalm 2, which seems to be a declaration of adoption by God, was almost certainly used at the coronation of the Jewish kings: 'You are my son; today I have begotten you.' Peter's answer at Caesarea Philippi is, on one layer at least, a recognition of Jesus as the anointed king of Israel – 'you are the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Son of the living God.'

The Hebrew scriptures play a big role in the Gospel of St Matthew. Jesus himself stresses the continuity of the revelation and Matthew often adds his helpful commentary: This took place to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet... It's worth pondering on this for a while. It is unlikely that the prophets felt that they were writing a script of events that were going to be enacted hundreds of years after they died; they didn't think of themselves as fortune tellers, a profession they looked down on. Instead, they were truth tellers, whose task it was to uncover the spiritual forces at work behind the events of the day. Often, we can find the contemporary events that they were referring to. However, they had a habit of turning ordinary understanding of those events on their heads. By looking at the signs of the times, the prophets were able to reach the layer of archetypes, where history does not flow in a straight line but embodies archetypes in repeating cycles. This is what it means that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies: what before was a faint imprint of the archetypal was manifest in his destiny in its fullest form.

Along with the sense that Matthew gives us that Jesus is the anointed king come to claim his heritage, there is another message, which – like the prophets – subtly subverts the expected meaning. Jesus' birth brings him into connection with regal figures, but the appointed ruler of Judea sets out to destroy him. Far from being brought up like a king, he flees and lives in exile, repeating the history of the Jewish people who were 'strangers in a strange land'. Even when Peter speaks his words of recognition, which Jesus freely accepts, Jesus goes on to predict what the outcome of his journey to Jerusalem will be: *From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. (16:21)*

This is not part of a kingly destiny. It did however form a part of the images of the Messiah that had been cultivated for nearly 1000 years by the time of Jesus – a hidden part, voiced in the minor key. These were the predictions about the Suffering Servant, drawn together in Isaiah 53. I will write more about this for Maundy Thursday. On Palm Sunday we see how Jesus accepts his kingship but gives it quite a different meaning to the one those around him expect. We can see this clearly if we visualise the contrast of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, riding the humble donkey as a messenger of peace, and the other procession that took place around the same time, perhaps even simultaneously: the entry of the Roman Prefect, Pontius Pilate, on the western side of the city. Pilate, who normally lived on the coast, brought his soldiers in to reinforce the fortress in Jerusalem during the Passover. It would have been a daunting display of Roman imperial cavalry and soldiers. Pilate's procession also had a theological dimension. Since Augustus, who ruled from 31 BC to 14 AD, the emperor was seen not only as the ruler of Rome, but as the son of god.

Victorious kings would demonstrate their humility by riding donkeys instead of their charger. As the events of the trial later in the week demonstrate, only the threat to Roman authority that a royal pretender represents stirs Pilate into action where the squabbles of the Jewish authorities about their religion leave him unmoved. The assertion of kingship, even one so different from the earthly power of Rome, is a threat that cannot be ignored. Palm Sunday sets the course for the conflict between a new kind of kingship and the dominion of the Empire which can only end on the cross.

-TR

Supporting The Christian Community

The Christian Community is funded by contributions by members and friends. In this time of crisis, when the priests' work is needed more than ever, we are facing a fall in our income through reduced collections and fundraising events. Christian Maclean's letter from The Christian Community Trustees is included in this mailing.

We are aware that many people are suffering financial hardship and uncertainty in this time. However, others may find that what they had put aside for the collection is burning a hole in their pocket. If this is your situation, we would ask you to consider taking out a standing order or increasing your existing one using the enclosed form. You will also find bank details there to make a one-off payment.

Contact information

Please fill in the information you would like us to record and send it to the church

NAME

ADDRESS.....

Email **Phone**

Mobile

Please indicate ways in which you would like to be contacted

Phone Email Post

Please include me on the congregational telephone tree.

I understand that my phone number will be visible to others

Your signature

PRIVACY NOTICE

The Christian Community will only use information provided by you in the appropriate form. Information will not be shared with other organisations or individuals. Information will be held by the congregation priests and by the administrator / secretary.

Information will be used to contact you about programmes and events to be held in the congregation or nationally; to inform you about critical events in the life of the congregation; to inform you about the congregation's financial status and to make specific appeals as agreed by the finance group.

Please tell us if you move or change other contact details so that we may keep the information we hold up to date. You may tell us at any time if you would prefer that we no longer hold information.