



Caring for seafarers
around the world

Lent Reflections

The Mission to Seafarers

Lent 2020

Join us on a journey through Lent
as we reflect on life and faith.

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The First Sunday of Lent

1st March

Matthew 4.1-11 – Jesus in the Wilderness

The Journey

The pace of life can be hectic for many. It seems that years go by so quickly, many things planned for get missed, and there just aren't enough hours in the day. This is the ever-present challenge for so many people. It is no surprise then, that all the major faiths encourage us to take some time to ponder, take 'time out' and think about life, faith, loved ones and all humanity.

For the Christian Church, the season of Lent is one of self-reflection where we pray for ourselves and others, we abstain from something we enjoy, and we take stock of our lives. The Bible reminds us of Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days with hardship, hunger and temptation as constant companions before he started his work in the world.

They say that 'the journey is as important as the destination', so Lent is all about helping us see things 'how they really are', in the hope is that – when Easter arrives – we will be free from the wilderness and resurrected from the things which hold us back. It is then our task to help others, who might be still in their own wilderness.

Seafarers have much time to reflect on life, they hold much wisdom and insight into the importance of living life to the full, how we should cherish every moment and give thanks for each and every day. When The Mission to Seafarers chaplains visit ships or welcome seafarers to their centres across the world, we are privileged to hear their reflections on life at sea and life at home. We hear the truth of their lives and help in any way we can, especially if they are stuck in their own wilderness, waiting for a better day when they can be reunited with their loved ones.

*This Lent, please pray for
seafarers who are far
from home and loved ones.*



The Second Sunday of Lent

8th March

John 3.1-17 – Nicodemus
Faith and Trust

Faith is to believe what you do not see;
the reward of this faith is to see what you
believe - St. Augustine

The season of Lent is always challenging. We are invited to take time and reflect on our lives and see how we can play a part in making a better world for all.

The story of Nicodemus in the Gospel of John is a warning that faith is not about having all the answers but being able to live in the tension, having an open mind and watching for signs. The dialogue follows a common pattern: a person asks a question, Jesus gives a puzzling answer, the person misunderstands, Jesus gives an even more puzzling answer, then slowly a discourse follows.

The fact that there was no instant understanding didn't deter Nicodemus. This rich and powerful individual would be found after the crucifixion bringing expensive ointments to anoint Jesus' body.

Nicodemus didn't understand immediately, but he was willing to watch and wait, listen and learn. Being able to live in the tension of everyday life, without all the answers, is something special.

For seafarers, the speed of unloading cargo, the day-to-day changes and the weather, all play a part in making life irregular and unpredictable. Seafarers must trust each other, trust their captain and trust that they will be home with their families, safe and sound at the end of their contracts. This is a challenge which can be too much for some.

In our search for certainties in life, we sometimes need to let go of our natural desire to find answers, trust that with God all things are possible, always looking for those small signs that He is at work in the world.



*This Lent, please pray for
seafarers who live each
day with uncertainties.*

The Third Sunday of Lent

15th March

John 4.5-42 – The woman at the well

Mission

The 40 days of Lent is preparation for the believer, with acts of fasting, giving up certain luxuries and taking up a Lenten spiritual discipline, such as praying and reading scripture. All these are to help draw us closer to the will of God. In that sense, if we engage with Lent in preparation for Easter, we see faith differently. We are gently challenged and changed.

It is no accident that this story appears in the Bible immediately after the story of Nicodemus. It gives a wonderful contrast that jumps off the page, showing us that mission is about pushing ourselves to work beyond our usual context.

Nicodemus is a powerful person, a Pharisee, a leader, everyone knows him, and when he speaks people listen. He met Jesus under cover of darkness. The woman at the well has no name, as a Samaritan, she is a religious and political outsider, she meets Jesus at noon in broad daylight and engages in theological conversation.

In the Gospels, none of the actions and words of Jesus are without meaning. The story of the woman at the well shows us that to be involved in mission is to be sent to serve people of all faiths or none, whose names we might not know, visitors to a foreign land who may need help and support.

For more than 150 years, The Mission to Seafarers has brought compassion and care to seafarers, our response, is to provide a home-from-home in our centres, where they can contact families and talk with our staff and volunteers. Just as importantly, our chaplains seek out those who cannot come ashore, climbing aboard and speaking with crews.

*This Lent, please pray
for those who visit ships
in winds and weathers.*



Mothering Sunday

22nd March

John 19:25-27 –

At the foot of the cross
Family

As Lent progresses, we have a Sunday which takes a different theme. Traditionally, Mothering Sunday was a time when people would visit their 'mother church' usually with their own mothers. Eventually, it became the day when domestic servants were given a day off – for many this would have been the only Sunday they were able to take time off and visit family.

On this theme of family, the reading from John's Gospel takes us to the Crucifixion. At the foot of the Cross, we find those closest to Jesus. Turning to his mother and John, Jesus says "This is your son", and to John "This is your mother", making them dependent upon one another in what will be a difficult and dangerous time.



You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them -
Desmond Tutu

This sense that we should feel a responsibility to care for one another in challenging times is at the heart of the Christian faith. We are called to consider the needs of others as if they were our own.

Everyone who works for The Mission to Seafarers will speak of those times when many crews on ships see themselves as family, especially in difficult and dangerous times. I went to one of our centres to greet seafarers taking some much-anticipated time ashore – the first two crew through the door were an older bosun and a young cadet. The bosun pointed to the walls of the centre and then walked up to me and pointed to the flying angel on my Hi-Viz vest. *"This is your family, and this is your home"*, he said to the cadet. *"Wherever you are in the world, look for this sign"*. The cadet nodded; I was lost for words.

This Lent, please pray for seafarers who are a long way from home and miss their family.

The Fifth Sunday of Lent

Passion Sunday - 29th March

John 11.1-45 – Lazarus

Understanding love in a world of division

This long passage from John's Gospel is a story about love – there is the deep love of Mary and Martha for Jesus, and his love for them in return. They have experienced a tragedy, and even though Jesus delays travelling to them, he is with them in their pain and loss and is deeply moved. The raising of Lazarus from the dead is one of the last acts of Jesus before the Passion and his own crucifixion and resurrection.

It was my very first Christmas working with The Mission to Seafarers when I boarded a ship which had a crew of 21. I was then invited to go to the mess, to speak with the crew. I had a sack of presents. As I entered the mess, I spotted a well-decorated tree and some cards showing traditional Christmas scenes. I sat and was offered coffee as several crew appeared; it was coffee break. As I chatted, I started to unload the presents neatly under the tree, and wished them a Happy Christmas, as I knew they would be at sea on Christmas Day.

*This Lent, please pray for
those who are the victims
of religious intolerance
and injustice.*

I said, *"There are presents for everyone"* and then I realised that not all the crew might celebrate Christmas. I asked, *"Do you all celebrate Christmas?"* At that moment the cook appeared and said, *"We are 21 crew; one third Christian, one third Hindu and one third Muslim"*, I apologised assuming I might have offended. *"Why are you apologising,"* he said, *"Three religions, three times the festivals and three times the parties, we celebrate all faiths"*.

If the whole world were like this ship of 21 souls, the world would dance a to a very different tune – one of justice, hope and love.



Palm Sunday

5th April

Matthew 21.1-11 – Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem
Joy in a time of trial

Holy Week is here, and the highpoint of the Christian story is upon us. All the Gospel writers shift to concentrate on the details of the week, each interaction and step is captured. We are encouraged to live this week as if we were there 2,000 years ago, moving from the shouts of 'hosanna' as Jesus enters Jerusalem, to sit with the disciples at the Last Supper, waking to the emptiness and despair of Good Friday.

Reading the account of the first Palm Sunday, it is good to remember that being called to the Christian faith is to be willing to imitate Jesus, to sit with those in need and pray for them, then help practically so that they might be free from the things which consume their happiness.

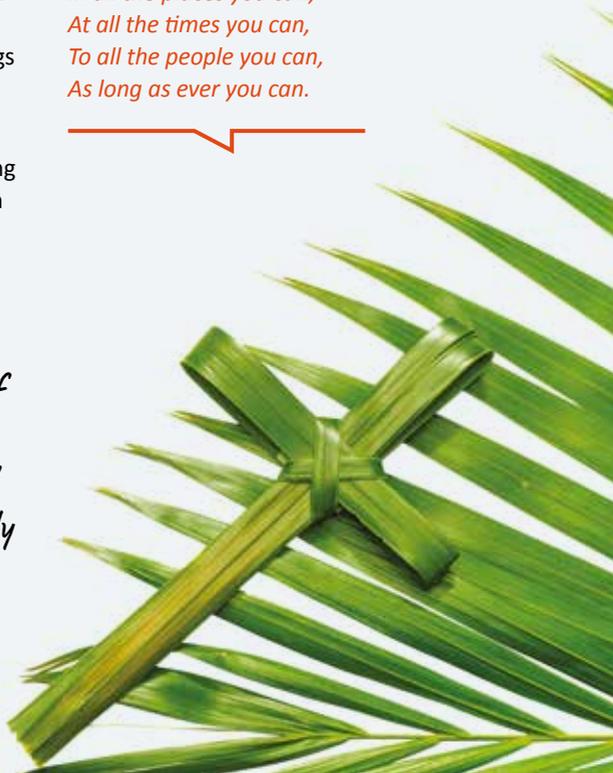
The Mission to Seafarers works around the clock caring for seafarers and assisting in any way we can. Whether it is through assisting with communication, so that seafarers might contact loved ones, listening to their difficulties and the

truth of their lives, or transporting them ashore for rest and relaxation, we speak of caring for their spiritual, emotional and practical needs. Listening to seafarers has meant that we have developed innovative Family Centres, supporting families at home, the Seafarers Happiness Index and a comprehensive range of welfare and emergency support services.

It was John Wesley who said:

*Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.*

*Please pray for the work of
The Mission to Seafarers
and those they serve, and
may you have a blessed Holy
Week and Easter.*



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