

St Luke's in the City

4th Sunday in Lent

18 March 2007

Celebrating at the CROSSroads

Dear Friends,

We're half way into Lent. Passion Sunday of the Palms is just two weeks away. I want to encourage us all to take stock now of our plans for Holy Week. Each year I have been at St Luke's I have emphasised the importance of Holy Week and the Easter Triduum in the life of the Church and for the life of faith. Everything else we do has its source in these great days and its unique liturgies. Yet we Anglicans have a long history of 'pick-and-choose' worship habits, carving up even the Easter Triduum. We have not yet come to appreciate that the Easter Triduum is not three separate liturgies, but one great liturgy. Some of you have remarked that on promotional material the print size for the 9am Easter Sunday eucharist seems to be getting smaller - this is quite deliberate! Easter morning only makes sense liturgically as the completion of what commenced on Holy Thursday. Once a year we are invited to exert ourselves and to stagger out of bed in the darkness of Easter morning. Yes, it is an exertion, but it is also the liturgy of liturgies. 'Business as usual' on Easter day hardly makes sense! I encourage you in the strongest possible terms to make the effort, to gather with the whole community of the baptised, supporting each other in our frailty in the dark, delighting together as the Easter dawn breaks.

Holy Week begins, of course, on Passion Sunday - this year April Fools Day! What could be more appropriate for us, having fallen for Christ's foolish way of love, being baptised followers of his foolish way of the cross? Passion Sunday existed long before Good Friday. It is dominated by the whole passion story. Passion, in this context, means suffering, from the Latin passio, as every real love demands suffering as well as joy. This Passion Eucharist, however, is also flavoured by the blessing of palms and the palm procession preceding it, commemorating Christ's decisive entry into Jerusalem, whereby he threw down the gauntlet to the religious and political authorities of his day. The procession dates from at least the fourth century of the Christian Era. On this first day of Holy Week we make our annual journey in faith and hope to the love at the centre of our life and faith. Our pilgrimage to the cross and the Easter garden demands all we have to give emotionally, and the physical effort pledges our seriousness. I urge you to join us. If you can't manage the walk, please let us know and we will borrow wheel chairs. Don't miss out. Don't excuse yourself. Let's do this together, hand in hand - or, at least, hand to wheel chair! Come, join the fun, be really playful; come, join the dance of love, be totally serious. I believe it matters enormously how we set out, that together we look steadily at our destination - worthy celebration of the Great Three Days of the Christian Passover from death to life. This is the sort of event which creates and cements Christian community, our fundamental unity in Christ transcending all our differences and divisions. This oneness in Jesus crucified and raised is nothing less than the good news for which our fragmented and frightened world yearns.

With my love, David