

St Luke's in the City

Celebrating at the Crossroads Last Sunday before Lent 2008

Dear Friends,

With Easter about as early in the year as it's possible, it's barely February and we're draining the font and burning palm crosses! Ash Wednesday is THIS week! You may have noticed that this Lent there are no extra events, no special courses or programmes. Instead, may I recommend a very quiet Lent, as uncluttered as possible, and focussed on the one thing that matters – our being together at the Sunday eucharist, and together for the Easter Triduum.

We are accustomed to choosing between a plethora of options, in virtually every aspect of life, including the religious domain. Instead, this Lent let's choose to do the one thing together that matters– start together on Ash Wednesday, continue together on every one of the Lent Sundays and Passion Sunday of Palms, and conclude together with an undivided celebration of the Easter Triduum. We may all be quite surprised to look around and see how many of us there are! The Lent-Easter seasonal guide 'Religious Revolution' contains information about the season and all the liturgies. Perhaps you may know someone who might find it helpful?

In conversation with a number of you about the parish Mission and Ministry Review I have been reminded, once again, of the tension between the institutional nature of the church and discipleship as an enterprise of the soul. During the review we have all been invited to reflect upon St Luke's as it presents and organises itself as an institution. Christian faith is not a solo exercise. When a community of believers come together some organisation and structure is essential. It is right and proper that we consider very practical and organisational matters. But does that mean that the church is just one more institution, one more collection of individuals coming together according to a set of agreed rules and with common objectives? In times of anxiety about the future of the church as institution it is certainly tempting to take that path.

It helps to remember that the church is not primarily an institution. The Gospels employ a range of metaphors to describe the community of believers, the best-known of which are *ἐκκλησία* *ecclesia*, which literally means 'meeting', and 'Body of Christ'. So our primary task is not to build an institution, and certainly not to attempt to safeguard the future of an institution. Rather, we are called to commit ourselves to a meeting place between earth and heaven, between matter and Spirit, between the human and the Divine. We consume the Body in order to become the Body. Lent offers us an opportunity to consider again our calling as that meeting place, as that Body.

With my love,
David