



Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney's Lent Course 2024

# THE WAY TO THE CROSS

FRIDAY 22 MARCH



## PERSONAL REFLECTION

This week's personal reflection is Bishop Dorsey's Passiontide letter to the Diocese.

Beloved in the Lord;  
Every year, as we approach Lent, I am never quite ready for it. I never know what to expect. I think I know my habitual sins after all these years, but God has a way of using the time to shine the light of the Holy Spirit into shabby corners of my soul that I didn't even know were there. And, whereas I reluctantly cross the frontier of Ash Wednesday to begin the season of repentance, by the time we get to the fourth Sunday, I feel as though I've scarcely begun. I look back on the past weeks, and they seem to have gone by in a flash, even though at the time it all felt like a long slog from day to day. And soon it will be Holy Week, then Easter. Honestly, I'm not ready for any of it. As I pass by the chocolate eggs already on offer at Morrison's, I scowl.

So, thank God for Passiontide. This season-within-a-season begins with the fifth Sunday of Lent and continues through Good Friday. It isn't broadly observed anymore, but I am holding onto it, for a very simple reason: I need more time, to take in the enormity of all we are about to observe, the nearly unimaginable scope of the Love of Christ, time to dwell in the mystery of the One who was willing not only to die for us, but also to inhabit fully the spiritual states we ourselves experience from day to day.

It is good that, this year, we hear so much from the Gospel of Mark, that most brief and breathless of the four evangelists. Mark uses the word immediately forty-one times. As we hear the story unfold we get the sense of urgency driving Jesus forward.

Collect for the  
Fifth Sunday of  
Lent

Most merciful God,  
by the death and  
resurrection of your  
Son Jesus Christ you  
created humanity  
anew. May the power  
of his victorious  
cross transform  
those who turn in  
faith to him who  
lives and reigns with  
you and the Holy  
Spirit, one God, now  
and for ever.  
Amen.

His disciples can barely keep up with him, running here and there, healing, teaching, casting out demons. Mark observes at one point that they had no leisure, even to eat. But all this changes with Palm Sunday. The immediately's nearly disappear. Everything slows down, as if Mark wants us to move through the rest of the days in real time in close company with each of the players: with Judas, as he betrays; Peter, as he denies; the disciples, as they slumber; and especially Jesus, in his anxiety and fear, his courage and truth-telling, his patience and mercy. It is a lot to take in.

I am trying to read the whole narrative every day, Mark 14 and 15, only two chapters, but with what weight do these words drop into my heart! Each day something else sinks in from what I read, as though I had never read it before. But the common thread is this: Jesus our Lord knows first-hand the turbulence of my soul; by his sorrow and his love he is determined to turn every shabby corner of it into a storehouse of his Grace, a place where the Spirit prays in me, until I finally become a mansion fit for him.

I know he won't be done with me by Easter or even by the end of my mortal life! But each day draws me closer to him, so that when Holy Week comes, I will be able to walk the Way of the Cross with a more open heart and greet the Resurrection with something of the joy known by the women who saw him first.

Please join me on this road, and know you are all in my grateful prayers as we walk together.

Faithfully,  
The Rt Rev Dorsey  
McConnell  
Acting Bishop  
Diocese of Aberdeen &  
Orkney

I will put my law  
within them,  
and I will write  
it on their  
hearts; and I will  
be their God,  
and they shall be  
my people.

*Jeremiah 31.33b*

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## *Usual Weekly Pattern*

Sunday  
RCL Eucharist  
Readings and Collect

Monday  
Delving Deeper into  
the Readings

Tuesday  
Words from Others  
(sacred & secular)

Wednesday  
Resources from the  
Arts

Thursday  
Contemplative Acts

Friday  
Personal Reflection  
- what this means to  
me

Saturday  
Acts & Deeds