



Caring for seafarers
around the world

Lent Reflections 2022

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

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The First Sunday of Lent –

Luke 4:1-13

The Journey Begins

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.

The season of 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 be resurrected from all that holds us back. It is then our task to help others, who might still be in their own wilderness.

The past two years have been challenging for so many people, so many have had journeys cut short, plans have changed or lost forever. Wherever we are, and wherever we live, we have all taken turn sitting in our own wilderness.

A seafarer recently spoke of how life had changed for him. There had been no shore leave for the past two years, and he had spent over 18 months away from his family. Arriving at a new port, he would see the bright lights of a city and would imagine the sights and sounds, knowing he would be unable to set even one foot on dry land. After a couple of days and his ship would sail again, onward to the horizon where another city would emerge, so close yet so far away. Much had changed for him, he didn't know if he could continue at sea, although his family needed his pay to survive. Life, for him, was a circle of work and sleep, and he was exhausted. He felt trapped in his own wilderness, just waiting for that day when he could return home once again, maybe for good?

Do we know of people who are struggling like this seafarer?

Do we sometimes feel trapped?

Can we help and pray for those who are in their own wilderness?





**The Second Sunday of Lent –
Luke 9:28-36(37-43a)**

To be Transfigured

The theme of journeying continues this week, as we follow Jesus on that long journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, where the story of the Transfiguration has extremely important consequences. At the top of the mountain there is a magnificent scene where the Trinity, illuminated, radiates together, and the glory of God shines through. It is then we see Jesus transfigured.

This scene provides us with two clear lessons; firstly, to properly engage in this life of faith and hope we are to work together in this world, illuminating and strengthening each other. Then secondly, just as Jesus appears transformed by this, we too are called to be transformed, from the ordinariness of our everyday lives to reflect the God who called us to make a difference in this world, until we meet in the next world. To start a Lenten journey is to ask God to be with us as we think and pray about our own lives, asking what we can do to help others and share love, peace and justice in a world that needs it so much. Just imagine what could be possible.

As each new day dawns in the east, it is possible to follow a wave of action across the world, as the work of The Mission to Seafarers continues. Our chaplains and ship visitors visiting seafarers aboard their vessels, and our centre staff are welcoming them to a 'home-from-home'. Throughout the pandemic we have sustained and supported seafarers, because we have been called to do so, to bring light to those who sometimes sit in darkness.

We are never the same at the end of our Lenten journeys, we are all transformed in some way if we spend time in the light, listening to the God who calls. Our chaplains and ship visitors, centre staff and so many others can tell you a story of how they felt called to do the work they do today.

Do we wish we could all be transfigured somehow, so that working in community, bringing justice to others and valuing peace could be the norm for everyone?

What one thing will we do this Lent to make the world a better place?





**The Third Sunday of Lent –
Luke 13:1-9**

***Life, but not as we
know it***

We are reminded of how precarious our existence can be. Life is fragile, so it is urgent that we don't leave things for tomorrow when we can do them today. We need to keep believing in a better tomorrow, never giving up. Surely, this is one of the main lessons of the last couple of years?

Faith doesn't do much to explain why disasters and tragedies happen, it just asks us how we will continue to live our lives and make good our promises to love others as ourselves.

The story of the fig tree being cut down is a difficult one, it clearly calls us to repent of our wrongdoing. Well, yes it does, but it also reminds us that tragedy and struggles that come suddenly have the capacity to help us be more conscious of our own lives and the world around us. They underline the urgency making sure that faith is something we live, rather than just have. Then we can lose our own concerns and worries and focus on the work ahead.

In the early days of the pandemic, when the motorways were quiet, the skies were empty and the world was in shock, the ports were still busy keeping global trade working. The heroes of this, over a million and a half seafarers, were struggling to keep things going. Ship visitors and chaplains were driving to many ports around the world, to listen to them as they told stories of their families at home, the uncertainty of when they might see them again, and the way in which life had become unbearable for some, with no shore leave and long working days.

Do we worry about how fragile life can be?

Do we see much tragedy and hardship all around?

What can we do to turn to face our challenges and find our being in serving others?

It's not too late to 'take up' something for Lent, rather than 'give up' something. This is the challenge in the middle of Lent.





**The Fourth Sunday of Lent/
Mothering Sunday –
Luke 15:1-3,11b-32**

***I was lost, and now
I'm found***

With the Parable of the Lost Sheep, followed by the Parable of the Lost Son, it brings back memories of sermons preached years ago, when we would consider why the single sheep was so important, which son we felt more akin to, and how difficult it is when we bring our own experience to our understanding of such parables. They are sometimes very challenging to read. We have all been 'lost' in some way in our lives, and to be found, loved, and celebrated is a vital thing. Not everyone can say that life has been so kind to them.

I remember deep theological discussions on the laws of Biblical times about which son was right and which wrong. I smile when I think of the how a good shepherd might have acted when a sheep was lost, and how sometimes it doesn't make sense in a world where people can be reduced to mere numbers or commodities.

Speaking with seafarers, they would regularly talk of being the prodigal son, returning home from foreign lands, to be welcomed with a feast by those who love them. Many are now questioning whether they might better serve their families by being the son who stayed at home, even though this might bring economic uncertainty and insufficiency for their family. The lack of shore leave, the difficulties in getting home, the long hours of work and dangerous conditions are all becoming too much to bear for many seafarers.

Do we feel that we are lost sometimes?

Maybe we feel the world has changed, and we are adrift, with no anchor to keep us steady?

Can we pray for ourselves, and those around us for whom life has altered so much, can we ask them how they are coping?





**The Fifth Sunday of Lent/
Passion Sunday –
John 12:1-8**

The Greatest Gift

The best gifts are always those given with thoughtfulness, don't you find? The activity of Mary showed that the cost of the gift wasn't important because nothing else would do.

Of course, as we approach the end of Lent, we are seeing the story unfold as Jesus gets closer to Jerusalem. Many of the scenes from the Gospels are foretastes of the crucifixion, and the dawning of the New Covenant with the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

The quiet and peaceful activity of Mary reminds us that small kindnesses have great effect, and the echoes of those stay with people for a long time. In our own lives as people of faith, we can emulate our heroes of the faith, and know that our activities, however small, have a wider impact that one could ever imagine.

The knitted woolly hats, distributed in many parts of the globe by The Mission to Seafarers are an excellent example of this. Far from merely keeping seafarers warm when the weather is windy and cold, they also serve as a reminder that although they might feel lonely and tired, they are not forgotten. When we give the hats as gifts, we tell seafarers that they are no ordinary hats, they are knitted by supporters who have been thinking about them, and how we are thankful for the work they do at sea, keeping the global economy afloat. We remind them that they are in our thoughts and prayers, even when we don't see them.

What should we give to help others?

Money, time, and prayers are all good, but thoughtfulness makes the gift so much more effective. This Lent, we could think of how we can give gifts that mean more to those who receive them.





Palm Sunday –

John 12:1-8

The Price of Freedom

Holy Week is here, and the pinnacle of the Christian story. All the Gospel writers shift to concentrate on the details of the week, each step is captured so that we might understand what is happening and tell the story to each generation. 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.

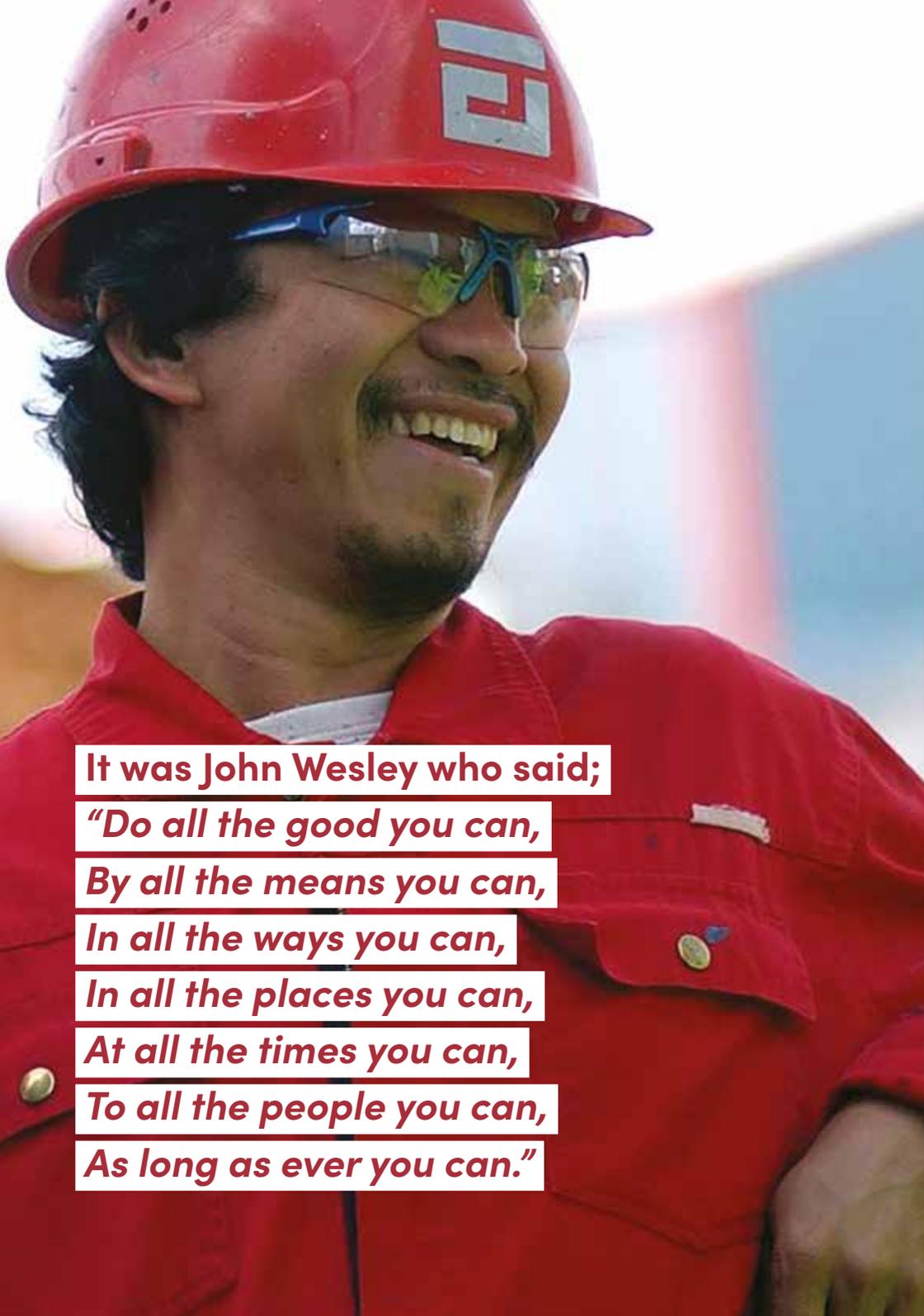
Reading the account of the first Palm Sunday, it is good to remember that being called to the Christian faith is to be willing to imitate Jesus, to sit with those in need and pray for them, then help practically so that they might be free from the things which make life unbearable.

Many years ago, at my ordination, I promised to 'promote unity, peace and love' amongst those I serve. This isn't the preserve of clergy, through our Baptism all Christians have the same charge. There is a caveat however, bringing about unity peace and love is tiring and difficult work. It will sometimes put you at odds with those who are in authority, and it will mean that you will never rest, because the work never ends.

The world has changed so much in the last two years, and now we need to pick up the pieces and celebrate the hard work of those who have served others so well. Seafarers have had it tough, to be away from family for up to eighteen months, with little or no communication, has been a living nightmare. Family members have been born, they have died, they have changed, and some relationships have ended.

The Mission to Seafarers worked constantly throughout the pandemic, and is still working around the world, around the clock, every day of the year, tirelessly caring for seafarers. In addition to this, we are trying to quantify the human cost of this extraordinary time, and ask how we can help in new ways, focussing on families, education, support, and technology too.

We respond to seafarers' immediate need and think about how we might be their voice, in making their lives better and calling for a brighter future.



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.

If you can help us in any way, don't hesitate to contact us, we are waiting to hear from you.

Call us on + 44 (0) 20 7248 5202 or visit missiontoseafarers.org/donate.

Thank you for your support.

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