

AGAPE



A COMMEMORATION of LOVE

Reflections

For

Holy Week

2026

Garthamlock, Ruchazie and Craigend linked with Stepps

WORDS of INTRODUCTION

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

(John 1: 1 - 5, 14)

It might seem strange to introduce a collection of Holy Week Reflections with a reading commonly used at Christmas celebrating Jesus coming into the life of the world as the “Word made flesh”. Yet, it is not strange because Holy Week and the readings we associate with it get to the very heart of what it means to say that Jesus came to be one with us in all that life throws at us. From the beauty of the anointing at Bethany through the denial and betrayal to the final meal and crucifixion we are reminded that this was for us - for you and me. This journey with Christ brings these words from John’s Gospel to life.

As Jesus journeyed to us and journeys with us Holy Week is that opportunity for us to walk with him to catch something of the sights, sounds and emotions as well as significance of all that happened for him and for us.

*Go to dark Gethsemane,
You who feel the tempter's pow'r;
Your Redeemer's conflict see;
Watch with Him one bitter hour;
Turn not from His griefs away;
Learn of Jesus Christ to pray.*

(James Montgomery, the Christian Poet)

There are reflections for each night, Monday to Saturday and I hope that these will be help to you and an encouragement to stop and be still.

On Maundy Thursday there will be an AGAPE meal at 7 p.m. in Garthamlock, Ruchazie and Craigend Parish Church which will conclude with a celebration of Holy Communion. On Good Friday there will be a service at 7 p.m. in Stepps Parish Church.

Monday, 30th March



AGAPE: A COMMEMORATION of LOVE
The Anointing: Love is extravagant

“While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. ‘Why this waste?’ they asked. This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.’ Aware of this, Jesus said to them, ‘Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. 13 Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.’”

(Matthew 26: 6 - 13)

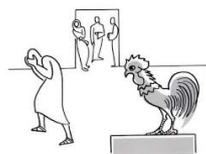
The word lingering long after this episode like the odour in the room is “beautiful”. Jesus himself described this act as something beautiful done to him. This is in stark contrast to the turning tide of opposition to Jesus when the ugliness of the crowd, the authorities and religious leaders was welling up soon to overwhelm him and those around him. Yet, not everyone sees this as beautiful and it is rejected as wasteful and, indeed, distasteful. There are, however, opportunities presented to make a difference in doing something beautiful and this woman (Mary) made the most of that moment.

- How would you have reacted if you had been there?
- What difference does it make to your reaction knowing what happened next with the ugliness of the opposition to Jesus and the abandonment and pain of the cross?
- What does it say about how precious the time we have is and what it means to make the most of it?
- What opportunities do you have to do something beautiful for God and for others?

Lord, help me to create 'Bethany moments' in my daily life, turning my tasks into acts of love, service and beauty to you and to others. Grant me the grace to offer you my best and to humble myself before you, knowing that your presence is my comfort and strength. Let my life bear witness to your gospel, releasing the fragrance of your love wherever I go.

AMEN.

Tuesday, 31st March



AGAPE: A COMMEMORATION OF LOVE

The Denial: Love is tested

Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, 'This man also was with him.' But he denied it, saying, 'Woman, I do not know him.' A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, 'You also are one of them.' But Peter said, 'Man, I am not!' Then about an hour later yet another kept insisting, 'Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean.' But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are talking about!' At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, 'Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly.

(Luke 22:54 - 62)

Here we see unfolding a moment Jesus predicted, a moment that must have haunted Peter for some time to come and certainly up until that moment when, on the beach, he was given the task of caring for God's flock. Was it a moment of weakness when he felt a knot in his stomach and his legs buckle from beneath him - a moment when he was fearful for his own life? Was he just so utterly confused and overcome by the blanket of darkness smothering him in despair? Whatever it was, it was a moment of regret seen in the tears that he wept and added to the sense of abandonment experienced by Jesus as he drew closer to the cross.

- If you were in Peter's sandals, what would have been going through your mind? What would have been your instinctive reaction - flight or fight or even freeze?
- How would Jesus have felt? Would it have made any difference that he knew that it was going to happen or did it just add to that sense of abandonment?
- Think of when you have been let down or when you have let others down? How did you feel and how did you manage to move on?
- What here and in the whole of the Holy Week narrative gives you hope?

Lord, when I am tempted to compromise or turn away, give me the courage of the Holy Spirit to stand firm. When I fail—as I know I will—help me not to fall into despair, but to remember your mercy is greater than my weakness and that my failures do not disqualify me from your love. Restore me and set me free. I pray in the name of Jesus.

AMEN.

Wednesday, 1st April



AGAPE: A COMMEMORATION OF LOVE
The Betrayal: Love is broken

“Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him. Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. “Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.” Then everyone deserted him and fled.”

(Mark 14: 43 - 50)

We've all been let down in life and by life at some point and, when it is betrayal, it seems so much worse than being disappointed in someone. Betrayal is often calculated - planned even - which is the case with Judas' betrayal of Jesus. Yet, as Judas planned the time, the place and the kiss Jesus' acceptance of it both before the arrest and at the time of it almost suggests that it was part of a bigger plan. Whatever our take on the motive for the betrayal it plunged Jesus deeper into the vulnerability and fragility of humanity.

- What do you think motivated Judas? Was it greed? Was he a radical? Was he a player in a bigger plan?
- We've all been let down but have you ever been betrayed? How did it feel? What was going through your mind re a motive?
- How did you deal with it and were you ever to let go/move on?
- What could you learn from Jesus?

Lord Jesus, as you spent time with friends in those last few days and hours, your enemies were gathering on the horizon. Give us alertness that we may see the dangers and difficulties around us leading to disappointment. Give us wisdom that we will know how to handle those dangers. Show us always how to be wise in our choices, yet innocent as doves.

Amen

Thursday, 2nd April



AGAPE: A COMMEMORATION OF LOVE
The Meal: Love is served

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.” After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

(Luke 22: 14 - 20)

Familiar faces, a familiar feast, familiar elements of bread and wine yet, Jesus took them by surprise, shock even, during the meal with words that directly associated himself with a sacrifice that would seek to set all people free. The surprise continued after the meal with Jesus rising from the table only to get on his knees and really and truly serve his friends. It was much more than food that was served that night it was love - a love that was not diminished with the descending darkness but grew and intensified. This was truly an AGAPE meal - a love feast with love on the menu and the sweet aftertaste.

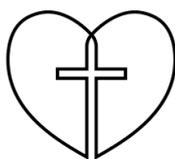
- If you had been there that night, expecting the set liturgy of the Passover, what would have gone through your mind when Jesus spoke about his body broken and his blood shed?
- Do you think the disciples saw it coming? Would you have seen it coming?
- What does it mean to you to know that every time you eat the bread and take the cup it was for YOU - for all of us in our brokenness?
- What does it mean for you and what you are willing to share with others?

*God of our journey. . . God of surprise. . . God with us,
as the day ends and the shadows lengthen, we draw close to you to be with your Son,
just as those first disciples gathered in an upper room all those centuries ago,
little knowing what was going to happen.*

On this holy night we come before you in trust, in expectation, even if we don't know what to expect, or what we should hope for.

*God of the changing seasons . . . God who calls us on down the road,
we listen in silence, and wait for your voice ...*

Friday, 3rd April



AGAPE: A COMMEMORATION OF LOVE

The Cross: Love is revealed

It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: the King of the Jews. They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!" In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on. At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. . . With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

(Mark 15: 25 - 32, 37)

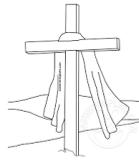
The public humiliation of carrying a cross intensified with the jeers from the crowd who taunted and teased Jesus. If he was who he said he was then, why could he not save himself and come down from the cross? Was he so powerless? He had the power but this power was no-where near as strong, intense and enduring as the power of love - the love that sent him into the life of the world and brought him to this very dark and dismal moment. A love for those who are unloved, abandoned, leered and jeered at - a love for all people - is revealed on the cross. It wasn't the authorities and the crowds who led him there or the nails that held him to the cross - it was love, love so "amazing, so divine".

- What does the cross represent to you? What does it say to you about Jesus and about God who sent him into the world - into your world and life?
- As Jesus carried his own cross, what is it you are carrying that he can carry with you?
- How does it feel to know that, in the shadow of the cross, you can let go and let the love of God in Christ set you free?
- Who around you and beyond you needs you to shoulder their cross with them?

*When I think about the cross
When I think of Jesus, I'm reminded of his love -
Love that never leaves me.
Who am I that He should die,
Giving life so freely?
When I think about the cross help me to believe it.
AMEN.*

Saturday, 3rd April

Holy Saturday



AGAPE: A COMMEMORATION OF LOVE

The Saturday: Love is silent

Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

(Luke 23: 50 - 56)

After the noise of the crowd, the shouts of “Crucify him!” and the cry” My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” came the silence. It was a silence that wasn't deafening. It was a silence that seemed more of a pause than an ending. In the promises of God and the words of Jesus, “It is finished” - a silence that spoke in a whisper of hope, albeit a fragile one. Family and friends, obedient to the Sabbath, had to wait and see as in hope there are times when we wait and see, held in the darkness until the light shines again.

- How might the women and the disciples have felt having to leave their Lord in that cold tomb? What would have been going through their minds?
- When have you had to walk away as they did? How did that feel for you?
- Tonight, whoever you are and wherever you are, do you hear God speak in the silence? What is he saying to you?

Dear God, I am reminded this Holy Saturday that you are no stranger to death, darkness, or doubt. Help me to remember; as I wait with-in my own discomforts and fears today, that you are still present... I rest in you, as I wait for what only you can do.

Amen,

SERVICES

Sunday, 29th March

10 a.m. Stepps Parish Church

11.30 a.m. Garthamlock, Ruchazie and Craigend Parish Church

Palm Sunday Service

“From cheers to jeers!”

A Service of Readings and Reflections

Thursday, 2nd April

7 p.m. Garthamlock, Ruchazie and Craigend Parish Church

Agape Meal with Communion

A Commemoration of Love

Love is served

Friday, 3rd April

7 p.m. Stepps Parish Church

Good Friday Service

A Commemoration of Love

Love is revealed

Sunday, 5th April

9 a.m. Hogganfied Loch

Joint Open Air Service

10 a.m. Stepps Parish Church

Refreshments

11 a.m. Stepps Parish Church

Joint Service for Easter Sunday

A Commemoration of Love

Love is eternal