

## Reflection for Second Sunday of Lent

By Revd Sue Strutt

Last week Christina talked about the preparation of Jesus for his ministry. This week we see him preparing the disciples for what is to come.

Jesus had asked his disciples who did they think he was. It must have rejoiced at the light of revelation begin to dawn in their minds after their previous dullness and the blindness of the Pharisees. After Peter had declared him to be the Messiah, Jesus talked to them about his future, which shows how aware he was of his Messianic mission. He went into it with his eyes open. He knew it would lead to the cross.

At first the disciples did not understand what he was saying. The Jews had understood the Messiah to be triumphant for their nation even though there had been prophecies of suffering too (Isaiah 53). Peter, therefore, was not happy to hear what Jesus was saying. We do not know exactly what Peter said but probably tried to steer Jesus away from the course upon which he was set. Jesus recognised the voice of temptation again and told Peter to be quiet. The goal of true discipleship is complete conformity to the divine mind – the mind of God, not to judge by human standards or think in human ways.

Jesus is telling his listeners that to follow as a true disciple will lead to death. That is exactly what his mention of the cross meant to the disciples in those days. There is a more subtle message for us in our day. To follow Jesus is to deny oneself, a complete dethronement of self so that life may be totally Christ-centred – ego gone, Christ in its place. This is *real* life. To gain that, we must lose our worldly life.

How do we do that, you will say, because in our world we have to work and make enough money in which to live and, quite often, the harder we work the more we will earn. We will end up with more than we need and there are temptations to strive for more along the way. We are urged to 'find' ourselves, express ourselves in our own way. This is good but, if in finding ourselves we decide to proclaim openly we are a follower of Christ and put our 'self' to one side, we are often mocked. This is our cross to bear.

But we must not be discouraged. Jesus goes on to say that although there will be suffering, the triumphant strand of the Messianic prophecy will come after death, his victory will be fulfilled. We look forward to celebrating that at Easter.

In the meantime, we must follow the faith of Abraham who was asked to believe the impossible would happen, and St Paul, who writes so eloquently of faith. In God's hands the future is bright and will bear fruit.

As the Psalmist says – "You who fear the Lord, praise Him!"

With my love to all,

Sue

