

PARISHES OF
ST PIUS X, ALDERLEY EDGE, ST BENEDICT'S, HANDFORTH
AND
SACRED HEART & ST TERESA'S WILMSLOW

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Sunday 15th March 2026 Fourth Sunday of Lent - Mothering Sunday
The Way of the Cross
Jesus consoles the women of Jerusalem

"A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children." Luke 23: 27-28

"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Isaiah 40: 1-2

When we are suffering physically or in our hearts, it is hard to see the suffering of others. It is hard to see the grief in the eyes of another. It is hard to notice *their* tears. When Jesus passes by the women as he walks, ahead of Simon who is carrying the cross behind Jesus, Jesus turns. He *turns*. He turns round to face the women and to speak to them, who he sees mourning and weeping, and to comfort them. They are seen by him, recognised and known by him, and loved by him. In his physical suffering, and in the emotional torment of what is to come, his focus at that moment is on the suffering of others. His gaze is upon them.

In an address in 2021, Pope Francis describes 'God's style' as having three traits: closeness, compassion and tenderness. But it is only Jesus who can fully reveal the loving heart of God, the Father. That is why God sent His Son to us - to make known the love of the Father.

A father will always console his daughter, even when he himself is suffering. Our earthly fathers, whether familial or spiritual, are only an image of the Form of the one true Father, but they are a precious image. And here our heavenly Father, through the heart of his beloved only Son, consoles his beloved daughters, the daughters of Jerusalem.

We are, of course, all adopted as God's children through the waters of Baptism, co-heirs with Christ, but it is important that here Jesus addresses the women as the 'Daughters of Jerusalem'. The city of Jerusalem was home to the Temple - the central place of worship for the Jewish people.

For years the Jews had carried a portable 'temple' around in the form of the Tabernacle of Moses as they travelled. Wherever they were, they viewed the Tabernacle as God's dwelling place on earth. In the mid to late 10th Century BC a splendid temple, the Temple

of Solomon, was built in the City of Jerusalem. It lasted only a few centuries before its destruction during the Babylonian invasion and 2 Kings Chapter 25 narrates the dramatic and shocking story of the Temple's destruction. A Second Temple was built in Jerusalem not many decades later and was still in existence at the time of Christ's death.

Jesus prophesies the destruction of the temple (and the Second Temple of Jerusalem was indeed destroyed in 70AD by the Romans) in John 2:19-22. It will be, he says, destroyed and rebuilt in three days. The temple he is speaking of in this context is, of course, his body.

But while the Second Temple of Jerusalem was seen as the place where God dwells among his people, where offerings were made and worship took place, biblical imagery makes clear that Jerusalem, and specifically its temple, is an image ultimately of the heavenly city, it points towards the heavenly Jerusalem described in Revelation chapters 21 and 22 - the final dwelling place of God with man. So the daughters of Jerusalem are also a symbol of those who will inherit eternal life in the heavenly kingdom. A symbol of the people of God - the Church - "prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband". (Rev 21:2)

Going back to our opening bible passages, we see that Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in Luke's gospel narrative. God will comfort his people. He does this through the love of Jesus His son, whose heart reaches out in love to each of us. Who speaks tenderly to each one of us. Whose heart desires to speak to our heart. "Cor ad cor loquitur" - heart speaks to heart - a phrase St. John Henry Newman adopted as his motto, himself repeating words which the gentle saint, St Francis de Sales was fond of saying.

When we are baptised in Christ, and commit our lives to follow Him, we are all the daughters of Jerusalem - men and women - we all form 'the people of God', the Church, the bride of Christ. When we allow Jesus to truly love us, to truly console our hearts, we begin to be able to experience a deeper level of love and compassion for others as our hearts begin to unite with His heart.

Can we console the heart of Christ?

**Lord by your cross and resurrection
you have set us free.
You are the Saviour of the world.**

Rachel Grayson