



Bishop Goff's Holy Week Message

Jesus said, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you." John 12:35

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Holy Week is the longest walk of the year. We begin the walk on the outskirts of Jerusalem, near the Mount of Olives, where the disciples throw their cloaks over a colt and Jesus climbs on. It is a ludicrous sight - a grown man on a colt, his feet dangling to the ground. Everyone knows that real kings ride great stallions, not donkeys. But Jesus chooses to be a living parable, a parable of humility. Jesus chooses to embrace seeming foolishness to reveal God's wisdom, seeming weakness to show us real strength.

We continue the walk in Gethsemane where the disciples fall asleep as Jesus prays in agony. It, too, is a ludicrous sight - soldiers armed to the teeth to arrest the prince of peace, a disciple running away stark naked. We stay only because thousands of miles and thousands of years insulate us from the danger. Otherwise, our walk would end as quickly as theirs did.

We walk with Jesus to the mockery of a trial where the powerful hurl lies and false accusations. We walk with Peter, Jesus' friend, who denies him three times then weeps bitter tears. These, too, are ludicrous sights - those with all the control inventing fictions, those with great love succumbing to fear.

As we walk on, we see Jesus mocked, stripped and beaten, wishing we could be as far away as the men disciples, desiring to bolt as they did, because the pain and fear are too much to bear. We walk yet farther, following Jesus as he carries his cross, mourning with the women he meets on the way. And we stop, we still our walking feet, as we look on from a distance as Jesus hangs on the cross. This, too, would be a ludicrous sight were it not so agonizing. A grown man, acclaimed only days before as king, hanging stripped, exposed, impotent. But Jesus chooses to be a living parable, a parable of humility. Jesus chooses to embrace seeming foolishness to reveal God's wisdom, seeming weakness to show us real strength.

Will we accompany Jesus the rest of the way? When our lives, or the lives of those around us, bring us to places of trial and suffering, will we walk with Jesus there? When the bitter, ugly realities of a world in need break in upon our lives, will we step outside our usual preoccupations to accompany Jesus there? When faced with hard choices, will we chose to be a living parable, a parable of humility, as Jesus was? Will we choose to embrace seeming foolishness to reveal God's wisdom, seeming weakness to show the world real strength?

May God give us such courage. In words inspired by a collect in A New Zealand Prayer Book, we pray:

Jesus, when you walked the way of love, people shouted their joy, they shouted their accusations, they shouted their pain. Grant us your strength so that, when the shouting ceases, we will continue to walk with you all the way to the cross, all the way to new life. Amen.

Your sister in Christ,



The Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff
Bishop Suffragan and Ecclesiastical Authority