

Dear Friends

This year we shall once again hold a service of Stations of the Cross on Good Friday afternoon. When we first reintroduced that three years ago I think it is true to say that there was a degree of suspicion about whether we were doing something that was non-Anglican and strange. But the service has been popular on each of the occasions we have used it, and although there is opportunity for people to come and go throughout the hour and a half or so of the service, very few take it.

The service aims to recreate the last earthly journey of Christ, carrying his cross through the streets to Calvary. Originally it was conducted mainly in Jerusalem itself, and particularly so after 1342 when the Franciscans were made custodians of the holy places there. Franciscans have always been keen to find dramatic and pictorial ways of bringing the Gospel message to life. According to tradition it was St Francis himself who first 'invented' the Nativity play, for example. In those times a pilgrimage to Jerusalem was a lifetime's ambition – rather like the Haj of Islam today. And indeed, having made the pilgrimage, people were permitted to add the prefix Hadji – to their surnames, a practice we see all around us here in Cyprus.

But few people from around the world could get to Jerusalem and from the seventeenth century onwards it became more common to re-enact the pilgrimage wherever people were. It was the Roman Catholics who adopted this practice most enthusiastically, and Roman churches generally have stations inscribed around their walls. The word station means a place for stopping, and traditionally there are fourteen places for stopping as the story develops. Some of those places relate to events as described in the Bible. Others do not, and that has put some Christians off. Pope

John Paul II used a more ecumenical version in which all the stations have a New Testament reference, and in the past few years, far more Protestant churches have adopted the practice.

A glance at the Internet will show the huge variety of ways of making this pilgrimage around the church. Some liturgies concentrate on traditional texts. Some include meditations by famous people, like John Henry Newman; some have long opportunities for silent reflection, some include hymns. Some concentrate on personal penitence. Others use the service to point to the many kinds of suffering in our world today and perhaps, the ways in which we might be complicit in it. Some are overtly political; some are prompted by Liberation theology and others by an Anglo-Catholic tradition of piety. In particular places artwork helps the meditation. There is no one way of doing this. Any kind of pilgrimage can be a moving experience, as many can bear witness.

Our service is one of lessons, hymns and prayers on the move. We reflect on what the cross meant in Jesus' own day, and what it means in our own time. This year we shall be including some new litanies and prayers to say along the way that will give us opportunity both to draw attention to contemporary suffering, and to pray by name for those organisations and movements that are working to alleviate it.

However we make our own journey of the cross this year, it is important that we make it. Easter is incomplete without it.

Sue joins me in wishing you all a blessed Easter

*John Holdsworth* Parish priest / Chaplain

### **Services for Holy Week and Easter at St Helena's**

Please feel welcome to join us whether for the first time or as a regular congregation member

### **Palm Sunday (March 29th)**

9.30 Holy Eucharist .There will be blessing and procession with palms at this service

### **Wednesday in Holy Week (April 1st)**

The Church will be open for private prayer from 10.30 –12

### **Maundy Thursday (April 2nd)**

A Tenebrae service starting at 6pm. This service is of readings accompanied by the gradual extinguishing of lights. Tenebrae means 'shadows.' A similar service is celebrated in Orthodox Churches on Good (Great) Friday morning.

### **Good Friday (April 3rd)**

A Devotional Service based on the Stations of the Cross. The service begins at 1.30pm and lasts until 3, but there is opportunity to come and go and to stay for just ten minutes or for the whole time. The service will include hymns, prayers, readings and reflection.

### **Easter Day (April 5th)**

9.30 Holy Communion

We meet for worship at 9.30 every Sunday. Coffee is served in the courtyard after the service. The Church is open on Wednesday mornings for prayer, quiet reflection or, on occasion, special events and services. You are welcome.



**St Helena's Anglican Church Larnaca**

**Pastoral Letter Passiontide and Easter 2015**