

BBC Radio 4 Prayers for the Day

Saturday 23rd March 2013

Good morning.

For Christians the journey through the forty days of Lent is reaching its climax. This last week our attention has turned towards the cross and the Passion of Christ. This weekend sees the beginning of Holy Week and tomorrow is Palm Sunday. All over the country church communities will be gathering with processions in which people carry leaves from palm branches folded into the shape of a cross, often with a donkey leading the way, re-enacting Jesus's entry into Jerusalem. The crowds cut down palm branches and threw their cloaks on the road and cried out, "Hosanna, Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord".

Crowds can be fickle. By the end of the week even Jesus's friends and disciples had run away and he died on a cross.

The new Pope, Francis, and the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin, have been greeted warmly by crowds this week. We're feeling hopeful and are looking forward to their leadership, until they do something we don't like. It's surprising how quickly crowds can turn.

Jesus when he drew near to the city wept over it saying, "If you, even you, had only recognised on this day the things that make for peace." And the Gospel adds chillingly, "But now they are hidden from your eyes.... because you did not recognise the time of your visitation from God."

(Luke 19.41-44)

It doesn't get more real than that and today, in the early morning, as we look forward to all that lies ahead, let us pray that we may live with our eyes wide open, alert to the presence of God among us; and that in our homes and families, in our local communities and in the wider world, we may recognise the things that lead to peace, and in recognising them, do them.

Amen