

**Lent Reflection week 6**  
**25<sup>th</sup> March**  
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This season allows us to have a period of self reflection and preparation prior to Easter. It also allows us time to reflect on the suffering that Jesus Christ endured and the ultimate sacrifice he gave for each one of us in the world.

The Covid19 pandemic has caused much suffering over the last year and the long term effects will remain for some time to come. I have been pondering on the fact that many people around the world have, not only to cope with the effects of a pandemic, but are also in the midst of wars, drought, injustices and poverty. But Jesus came into the world to give us eternal Hope and Salvation.

*Into a dark world  
a snowdrop comes  
a blessing  
of hope and peace  
carrying with it  
a green heart  
symbol of God's renewing love.  
Come to inhabit our darkness  
Lord Christ,  
for dark and light  
are alike to you.*

*May nature's white candles of hope  
remind us of your birth  
and lighten our journey  
through Lent and beyond.*

**Hymn 600 from Rejoice and Sing**  
**Christ is the World's Light**

Christ is the world's Light, he and no other;  
born in our darkness, he became our brother.  
If we have seen him, we have seen the Father:  
glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's Peace, he and no other;  
no man can serve him and despise his brother  
who else unites us, one in God the Father?  
Glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's Life, he and no other;  
sold once for silver, murdered here, our Brother -  
he who redeems us, reigns with God the Father:  
Glory to God on high.

Give God the glory, God and no other;  
give God the glory, Spirit, Son and Father;  
give God the glory, God in man my brother:  
glory to God on high.

## A Reflection from the view of one of Jesus' Disciples

There is very little known about Simon the Zealot (sometimes referred to as Simon the Cananaean or the Canaanite) His name is found only four times in the New Testament, **Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:13-16 and Acts 1:13**. The term "Zealot" referred to a Jewish political faction that desired Israel's independence, both spiritually and as a nation. In the early first century AD, they sought to overthrow Rome through force and believed that the coming Messiah would bring such victory. Simon, it seems, was affiliated to this faction prior to becoming a follower of Jesus. This would make him at opposite ends of the political spectrum from the majority of Jesus' other disciples, especially Matthew, tax collector for the Romans.

"Coming down from the hills changed me. I met him first in that desert, where I'd blooded and battered and been bloodied and battered, on the steep road to Jericho. We'd both known the force of the law, the brutality, the demands of the military, and the homes smashed during so called searches, and the homes destroyed as punishment. A cowed people nursed their bitterness in strong community, closed against the other. It was during my second time in prison when my body ached from the beatings and the years stretched out ahead, that he visited, and brought cold water, clothing, food and dignity. I fell in love with the romance of faith in a different journey, the knowledge that the hills where we trained were the hills where he prayed. I could see why I needed him but not why he wanted me. In the years of the dirty war we'd lost sight of what we were fighting for: it was more "tit for tat", keeping up the fear so we might survive. But he brought me back to the centre, to the goodness and the truth and different way to live that I'd known as a child, then a youth. He refreshed my soul.

But follow him? Ex-taxmen, small business-folk, women with histories, there was a place for everybody in his company, I found. And being with him made us start to be kind again. Soldiers have bonds – we look out for each other. This was deeper. We gave without counting the cost, without hope of return. Not just to each other but we turned aside mistrust and took the risk with the strangers. And enjoyed the results. We laughed on the road.

Yet, I wasn't much good at the end. I wasn't the hand-to-hand combat type, more the bomb maker at a distance. I'd given up hurting people but it was bombastic Simon Peter who was better at security guard roles. I'd seen so much pain: I was scared at the thought of what it would be like. Going all the way with him. I'd seen my mates executed, even the toughest fall apart. In those hours, those days. That's the point: it doesn't pay to cross authority."

*I did not think, my friend, that I could love  
so little, or could be  
so self- absorbed I could not see  
your body on the other tree,  
that I could miss in this, my life's extreme,  
your living company.*

*You did not love the loud thief less then, love,  
though he could only hear  
his groaning anger at the world in pain  
which you have held so dear.  
So, Christ, if we turn from you at last,  
you are forever near.*

### **Afghan Sacrifice 2001**

The mild mannered man on the city council declared himself a former soldier and an atheist. He'd seen too much in Afghanistan. Then he told a story, just one.

They had been far out in the lawless areas, to the north. They scurried to leave the hostile village as tempers flared. All got in and the door, still open, the helicopter took off. At that moment, through the crowd, two women ran and each threw something through the door.

We thought we were done for, but the explosion, their lives' final sound, did not come. There were two bundles, each a desperately ill baby. "What mother could do that, so desperate she risked her child with strangers?". They cared for the two as best they could. One died on the flight but the other was taken to hospital and then to an orphanage in Kabul.

***Let us give thanks for:-***

Those who can change their way of life and show us the humanity within the enemy.

For those who recognise their own failures and return to show us how to be braver than they.

For those wars that have ended, for unseen acts of gentleness or of withholding from slaughter expected or ordered.

Gracious God  
for your love for us  
gentle as a shower  
healing our pain  
binding our wounds.

**We give you thanks.**

For your love for us  
sure as the dawn  
transforming our darkness  
revealing your truth

**We give you thanks.**

For your love for us  
mercifully steadfast  
calling us to you  
raising us up

**We give you thanks.**

For your love for us  
encouraging questions  
open to doubts  
making us vulnerable

**We give you thanks.**

Urge us on, O Christ  
to find wholeness  
through serving you  
by serving others  
in the power of your Spirit

***Let us pray for:-***

An end to violence, and a recognition that speaking at the table earlier rather than later saves much suffering.

For child soldiers and all they have seen and been brought to do. We pray those who have suffered at their hands, and for all who seek to work for the future of all.

For the places in the world where violence dominates, for an end to suicide bombing and for an understanding of the cost and casualties.

For a just, peaceful, rapid and lasting solution in Israel-Palestine, the lands where the soles of your feet have touched the earth.

For Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and all those who are being held hostage and tortured for political gain or their religious beliefs.

For all those who mourn the loss of loved ones at this time, whether as a result of the Corona Virus or other causes, remembering the family of Sarah Everard who was recently tragically killed in London.

We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. **Amen**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name  
Thy Kingdom come  
Thy will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread  
and forgive us our trespasses  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil,  
for thine is the Kingdom  
the power and the glory  
for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

### **Philippians 4:4-9**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup> Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

### **Blessing**

The love of the faithful Creator  
The peace of the wounded Healer  
The joy of the challenging Spirit  
The hope of the Three in One  
Surround and encourage you  
today, tonight and forever.

**Amen.**

Material obtained from (suitable for non-commercial use for worship and group work) "Lenten Reflections from 13 lesser reported followers of Jesus' Passion" Rosemary Power, a Wild Goose Publications [www.ionabooks.com](http://www.ionabooks.com); "The Pattern of our days" Liturgies and resources for worship, edited by Kathy Galloway, The Iona Community.