

Eleven years ago My dearest friend, my soulmate, was diagnosed with terminal cancer. It was a mercifully slow growing one, but had spread too far. I went into research mode, learning all I could, reading, surfing the web, speaking with his doctors. My research brought me to a reputable hospital in Florida that was using a more precise scanning process than we had available in Europe and was able to remove or radiate cancer growth that would normally be terminal. I got in touch and worked out a potential plan. It was doable, but difficult. In the end Piet-jan, my friend, did not want that. I couldn't understand. It made me so angry and hurt to think there was a possible cure that would save him and he wasn't taking it. And I learned over time how hard it is to allow someone to carry their own cross.

One of the most difficult, painful lessons we learn as a parent, a son or daughter, a spouse, a good friend, or member of the human race. we cannot **'fix'** the person we love and see in trouble, like it or not we don't always know best, and even when we do it is not ours to act. We have a deep compassion for the suffering of those we love. Because of our different perspective we may even have insight into how their suffering may be lessened, but their suffering is not ours. Sometimes the cross we bear is to simply suffer alongside those we love

We have the stations of the cross all around us again. Each print can help us grow in compassion and gratitude for Christ's suffering. Each print can help us discern our own journey with our own cross. It can even help inform us of how we might support someone else's – look at Veronica who wipes Jesus's face POINT WHERE. We can do that for each other when it is welcomed. Simon the Cyrene WHERE, he was given the privilege to help Jesus carry his cross. I love how they are both pulling together. Contrast that with Peter in our gospel. Jesus was sharing his cross with his disciples and Peter's reaction was not where do you want me on this one Lord? Do I take a cross next to you? No, it was, 'I won't help you,' it was, 'you don't understand your own cross,' It was 'I want to fix you,' imagine. I think that's what my anger and sorrow must have looking like to my friend Piet-jan.

And I can appreciate Peter's lack of understanding. For 20 generations, 20 generations, there had been an understanding of the Messiah. He would make himself known and the whole Jewish structure would recognise this and bow down to him and raise him up. He would be the new king, the deliverer from slavery and oppression. No one disputed what this might look like. I don't think we can comprehend how revolutionary, utterly how foreign, Jesus's plan would have sounded.

Our first session of the Lent course has helped give me some insight on trying to fix others when I should be trying to understand. On how different our own cross might be.

*Depending on where we are sitting*, each of us can only see a part of what is actually here and will remember this service differently maybe very differently, each of us has a unique perspective on what is happening at any given moment in the world, in our home, in our church, only Jesus has the whole picture. And so the cross we bear and the circumstances we carry it through will look different to the bearer than it will to the observer, we have less to say than we thought

Taking up our cross with compassion and holding it with acceptance, holding it lightly, will teach us and grow us. A lot of what Lent is about is exploring our own cross and how we carry it, repenting when we get it wrong, accepting what is being asked of us, becoming willing participants in God's plan for us. As Peter did eventually even though he didn't understand any more than we understand.

Last Sunday evening Bishop Chris gave a compelling talk introducing us to Lent with two very different poems, each with the potential to feed us right the way through Lent if we choose to struggle with them. They are available on the website now and through the e-newsletter next week as well as the transcript of

Bishop's talk. At one point Bishop Chris ruminated from 1 Corinthians 13, Faith, hope, love, love is the greatest, but what about Faith, what about hope? These are essential. And the three are inextricably bound.

Faith is a gift from God. It's like a muscle that God builds as we offer our Lenten discipline. As it grows we develop the strength to pick up our cross, maybe even take on a larger, heavier one.

Hope comes from our Lord, what he did for us in love on the cross. It comes from God, what he has done for us in creation, in beauty, through each other, through ourselves, in all that he has given, from our past experiences. Hope gives us the ability to walk forward no matter what we carry.

And love, If we pick up our cross with love, God uses that to deepen our faith, and to expand our horizons such that hope may grow. Also like Simon the Cyrene, God will always help carry our burdens.

Take up thy cross the saviour said... feel the texture, get to know it, really know it and grow in faith, hope and love. Take up thy cross and have a Holy Lent. Amen