

Reflection for 5th Sunday of Lent.

I'm looking forward to my visit to St Thomas' this Sunday having been invited by Rev Sarah. As a retired priest with PTO we used to be colleagues in Sidmouth. I'm sure I will find you to be a *friendly* community – and 'friendship' will be the theme of the sermon!

St. Aelred of Rievaulx, who was Abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Rievaulx in the 12th century, was known as the Doctor of Friendship. He taught that true friendship is a spiritual gift which is a profound reflection of God's love. He valued human friendship as a sacred, enduring, and selfless communion of hearts that leads us to the love of God. He said that a friend is 'another self', and that through this committed companionship, we can be led to encounter Christ. He saw friendship as a healing gift from God.

The gospel reading about the raising of Lazarus will be our focus. Lazarus who, with his sisters Mary and Martha, were clearly his good friends. I want to explore with you how that can lead us into Holy Week.

So I look forward to sharing with you all 'the right hand of friendship'. (Galatians 2:9)

Fr Andrew Norman



NEXT SUNDAY 29.03.26 Palm Sunday

Clocks go forward

Main service 10.30am starting in the Hall



OT Exodus 2: 1-10
NT Colossians 3: 12-17
GOSPEL John 19: 25-27

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St Thomas, Exeter

22nd March 2026

Fifth Sunday of Lent

10.30am in the Hall

Today

Sung Eucharist

Hymn Numbers

293 Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

500 There is a Redeemer

287 Just as I am, without one plea

346 My song is love unknown

2.30-4pm Crafternoon in the church

Tuesday 24th March

7.30pm House Group at Helen's house

Wednesday 25th March

2pm Young at Hearts with talk by Rev Sarah

7.30pm PCC Meeting

Thursday 26th March

9.30-11am St Thomas Tot's

10.30am-12noon Knit & Natter at Jenny
Tuckett's house.

Friday 27th March

9.30am Stations of the Cross

10am Staff Meeting

Saturday 28th March

12.30pm St Thomas Lunch at the Royal Oak



Collect

Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Ezekiel 37: 1-14

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.' So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.' I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then he said to me, 'Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely." Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back

to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.'

Romans 8: 6-11

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

John 11: 1-45 (See attached sheet)

Post Communion

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters we do also for you: give us the will to be the servant of others as you were the servant of all, and gave up your life and died for us, but are alive and reign, now and for ever. **Amen**

Notices

Grateful thanks to **Rev Andrew Norman** who will preach for us at our service this morning.

If you would like to make a donation for **Easter flowers** please see Mary Naish or Ian.

Purple Day is an international effort dedicated to increasing awareness about epilepsy worldwide. Every year on March 26th people in countries around the world are invited to wear purple in support of epilepsy awareness. Please visit purple-day.org

The **House Group** will be meeting weekly through Lent.

On Saturday 28th March the PCC are meeting during the morning to pray together for the appointment of a new Rector, the future of St Thomas church and the community.

Your PCC will meet this Wednesday evening to pray and discuss the governance of this church. Please do pray for us and speak to any PCC member if you would like to know more about the PCC.

Holy Week is almost upon us and we will hold services every day to mark Jesus' final journey to the cross. Please look out for more information about this and do come along and support these extra services as we celebrate this most Holiest of weeks in the Christian calendar.

There will be a **Chrism Mass on Thursday 2nd April** at 10.30am in Exeter Cathedral.

Community Space - Thurs 2nd April Could you come by the hall sometime between 2pm and 5pm to help us shape how we offer this space in the summer before our new Rector starts? We're still working out how to advertise it so need opinions and feedback. Liz

Exeter Pride is on Saturday 9th May. Christians at Pride and Open Table Exeter will be participating in the March together with banners. Open Table will have a stand at the festival in Northernhay. Do join in! Email exeter@opentable.lgbt for more information.