

Clinging on

Ricarda Witcombe *reflects on* John 12:20-33

Today the path of Lent turns a corner and we enter Passiontide. We are called, with Jesus and by Jesus, to face the things we are most afraid of: death, loss, betrayal, darkness – you may add your own words to the list. In today's Gospel passage we see Jesus wrestling with some of these things for himself. Like us, he longs to avoid them – but he knows that avoidance is not the path of life. His prayer therefore is not that he will be spared from suffering, but that God will be glorified.

Our lives are filled with things we want to hold on to. Our sense of identity is so often bound up with

what we do, who we live with, where we live. These things are important – and yet, at the end of the day, the way of life is to let go of them all. Sometimes when circumstances force us to let go – illness, loss of employment, loss of a home – we can find the deeper sense of identity that is actually nothing to do with anything we thought. When things are stripped away, we find out what really matters. These next two weeks of the Church year lead us into a place of absolute reality – if we dare, we will see the truth of our human condition and the truth of God's love. Let us pray, with Jesus, that the glory of God will be known in us and through us. ☺



Lord Jesus Christ, you know the truth of our lives. You know what we struggle with and what we cling to. Give us grace to let go of ourselves and to put our hand in yours, that we may see God's glory and find true life. Amen.

Church music

Part I – *why do we make music in church?*

by Andrew Lyon

Why do we sing and use music in our liturgy? What is the purpose of our standing together to sing acclamations, hymns, antiphons and psalms? Why do we play voluntaries on the organ, or bring in guitars and other instruments to embellish our liturgy?

The extent to which music can be an aid or a hindrance to worship has always intrigued me. Early on in my musical education, I was given a copy of Dom Gregory Murray's setting of the Mass, and I can remember playing it on the piano in our back room at home. The music helped me pause over the words and ponder their meaning, and some of the harmonies and chord progressions seemed almost to fuse with the intensity of the words themselves, enhancing their meaning and connecting with my soul. ☺

Andrew is a church musician and publisher: @andyhodderfaith

“ Oh, God of Dust and Rainbows, / Help us to see / That without the dust the rainbow would not be.”

Langston Hughes (1901-1967), American poet, activist, novelist and playwright

World Poetry Day

by Christine Clark

Today is World Poetry Day. Christine Clark ponders the place and significance of poetry in our lives.

A couple of generations ago schoolchildren regularly learnt poetry by heart. This practice may have fallen out of favour now, but it is remarkable how long a poem can stick in someone's memory. That in itself may not seem useful, but people who can recall

poems find great pleasure in remembering the words that were once so hard to learn. And there is satisfaction in being able to come up with a line from an appropriate poem for every place or occasion.

But poetry is more than that. It gives us the words for feelings and emotions that we would otherwise struggle to describe. It speaks to our common humanity and shared values. And it has the power to remind us of the beauty of God's creation surrounding us and the resilience of the human spirit, usually in words that are more effective than our own. ☺

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