

Message from Bishop Rachel - 26 March 2024



As we enter Holy Week, I have been reflecting a lot on endings. As well as my life being touched recently by several poignant deaths and the experience of people who are currently walking alongside those who are dying, I am also aware of many situations I long to end.

Recently I had the privilege of being a parliamentary representative in New York at the UN Commission on the Status of Women. During the week I chose to attend a session focused on the women of Israel (including one of the freed hostages) and then another led by Palestinian women. The two rooms were in close proximity, but the gulf between the perspectives was heart-wrenchingly wide. My longing for a cease-fire and for the suffering in Gaza to end could not be stronger, neither could my longing for the ending of the nightmare of the hostages and their families. That desire for suffering and injustice to end was a theme throughout the week, not least as I listened to the voices of women from Ukraine and Afghanistan, and as I was repeatedly confronted with issues of poverty, lack of education and health. My prayers echo that of the psalmist: 'How long O Lord?'

This week, as we walk with Jesus Christ to the foot of the cross, there will be much that we lament and weep over, individually and together, as we look within ourselves and as we look out across our different communities and beyond to the wider world. And in all those endings we wish were not so, as well as all that we long to be over, we will recall once more the words of Christ as he hung on a cross and as darkness covered the land: 'It is finished'.

As we know, these words were not simply about an ending of life, but rather were revealing the deeper triumph of God's love and mercy which knows no end. Darkness, despair and death will not have the final word.

On Easter day, as we look once more at an empty tomb and rejoice at the inexplicable truth that Christ is risen, we will celebrate the mystery that, with God, endings give way to new beginnings. Unending hope is writ large amid the mess and pain of life. One day, all will be made new.

As we live this coming week amid the unwanted endings as well as all we long to be over, may the flame of Christ's resurrection hope be fanned into ever greater flame within us; and may we kindle that joyous hope among people and places near and far, through our worship, activities, being and presence.

Have a blessed Holy Week and a hope-filled Easter when it comes. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the [Chrism Eucharist on Thursday](#).

+ Rachel