

## Reflection for Saturday 20 March

Tomorrow Lent 5 begins the season of Passiontide.

We now consider the Passion and Death of Jesus and what it all means to us.

In order for us to understand what the Passion of Jesus means we should go back to the Old Testament and the exile of the people of Israel from their homeland. This took place around 500BC when the Babylonians drove the people out of Israel to exile in Babylon after having laid siege to Jerusalem, destroying its fortifications and burning down Solomon's magnificent temple.

The Babylonian captivity lasted around 50 years when the Babylonians had been conquered by the Persians and Cyrus the Persian king ascended the throne in 559BC. He favoured the Jewish people and authorized them to return home, allowing them to rebuild the temple.

The exile had been a shattering experience for the people of Israel because they could not practise their faith and they felt spiritually lost without the temple. Although they questioned their faith they learnt that God had not abandoned them. That was the first insight that came from this traumatic time of exile.

The second insight they had was that God had taken the initiative to bring them from a place of hopelessness to the land of promise. Through humiliation and disaster they had survived because of the saving intervention of God. So hope was rekindled that greater things would be in store for them.

These two insights are again part of how God is preparing the way for Jesus. Jesus comes to bring us out of the exile of sin and death to the glorious freedom of the Kingdom of God where God reigns supreme. Our Lenten journey in the last two weeks before we celebrate the glorious Resurrection, when Christ triumphs over sin and death, is bringing light to the darkness in which we live.

We might like to reflect on this question: have there been times in the last few months when we've felt cut off from God? We must remember that Christ has won the victory over darkness in his being raised again on the third day. We must look forward in hope to that coming day.