

Later this morning, at All Souls, we are going for a holy walk. Singing Immaculate Mary we will make our way from the church to the garden. And there we will place a crown of flowers upon the head of Our Blessed Lady.

Our readings today are quite clearly about love. God is love, and God demonstrates that love, makes that love real, makes that love available for you and me by sending us Jesus, by allowing his Son Jesus to die on the Cross and by raising him up again on the third day. *“A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends..”* says Jesus. Jesus is laying down his life for us.

The enormity of this love, the enormity of this sacrifice is difficult, if not impossible, for us to take in. Our little minds, our little hearts can't cope with such love. *“I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.”* So much joy, so much energy, so much intensity, is something we find difficult to take on board.

This is why I think going for a holy walk can be so helpful and therapeutic. We can't take in all this love in one go. We need to approach it slowly. We need to take one step at a time.

This is what Mary does. She takes it a step at a time. Her whole life is a journey. How on earth did she cope with the idea that the child in her womb was the long-awaited Messiah, the Chosen One of God? What was in her mind as she bumped along on that donkey from Nazareth to Bethlehem? And all the while heavily pregnant! The Scriptures tell us that after the visit of the shepherds she *‘pondered these things in her heart’*. I bet she did. That must be the best understatement of the gospels.

We know that the journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem was a frequent one for Jesus, Mary and Joseph. And where was Mary when Jesus made his final journey to Jerusalem? Never far behind, I am sure. *“Behold your mother, behold your son”* says Jesus from the Cross. We also know that Mary was there with the disciples as they await the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Mary's final journey was not to the earthly Jerusalem. Her final journey was to the heavenly Jerusalem, where she is to be crowned Queen of Peace, Queen of the Apostles and Queen of Heaven. This is our journey, too. Step by step, we grapple with God's promises. Step by step, we come to know with our humanity, our poverty and our suffering. Step by step, we approach, with Mary, that heavenly Jerusalem. Step by step, we are transfixed by God's love. Step by step, we are enabled to love one another.

Our Lady, Queen of Heaven, pray for us.