

During this time of Lent we go on a journey with Jesus.

A journey that we know is going to ultimately lead to Jesus death on a cross.

But we need to remember his disciples didn't know that.

The people who walked with him didn't know how things were going to end up.

But Jesus did.

Let us listen to today's reading from Mark chapter 10 from verse 32 to 34

I'm reading from the Good News translation of the bible.

“Jesus and his disciples were now on the road going up to Jerusalem. Jesus was going ahead of the disciples, who were filled with alarm; the people who followed behind were afraid. Once again Jesus took the twelve disciples aside and spoke of the things that were going to happen to him.

33 "Listen," he told them, "we are going up to Jerusalem where the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the teachers of the Law. They will condemn him to death and then hand him over to the Gentiles, 34 who will make fun of him, spit on him, whip him, and kill him; but three days later he will rise to life."

A time of reflection

Jesus and his disciples were now on the road going up to Jerusalem.

Jesus was going ahead of the disciples, who were filled with alarm;

the people who followed behind were also afraid.

Once again Jesus took the twelve disciples aside and spoke of the things that were going to happen to him.

Here is a vivid picture, all the more vivid because of the stark economy of words with which it is painted.

Jesus and his men were entering upon the last scene.

Jesus had set his course definitely and irrevocably to Jerusalem and the Cross.

(pause)

This picture tells us something about Jesus.

It tells us of the loneliness of Jesus.

They were going along the road and he was out ahead of them alone.

And they were so amazed and bewildered,

so conscious of the sense of impending tragedy, that they were afraid to go up to him.

(pause)

There are certain decisions which one must take alone.

Had Jesus tried to share this decision with the Twelve, their only contribution would have been to try to stop him.

Here we see the essential loneliness of Jesus, a loneliness that was comforted by God.

A loneliness that we also saw in his temptations in the desert when he was comforted and supported by angels.

(pause)

This picture tells us of the courage of Jesus.

Three times Jesus foretold the things that were to happen to him in Jerusalem,

and as Mark tells of these warnings,

each time they grow grimmer and some further detail of horror is included.

(pause)

At first (Mk. 8:31) it is the bare announcement.

"The Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law.

He will be put to death, but three days later he will rise to life."

(pause)

At the second time the hint of betrayal is there

Mk. 9:31.

"The Son of Man will be handed over to those who will kill him.

Three days later, however, he will rise to life."

(pause)

And now at the third time the jesting,

the mocking

and the scourging appear.

"Listen," he told them, "we are going up to Jerusalem where the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the teachers of the Law.

They will condemn him to death and then hand him over to the Gentiles,

who will make fun of him,

spit on him,

whip him, and kill him;

but three days later he will rise to life."

(pause)

It would seem as if the picture became ever clearer in the mind of Jesus as he became more and more aware of the cost of redemption.

And it got harder and harder to keep going knowing what was going to happen once he got to Jerusalem.

He had to force himself to go on

And he pushed himself at the front,

away from the fear and alarm of his followers
which was making it hard for him to keep
going

(pause)

The disciples were rightly filled with alarm.

They knew that something was up.

The people who followed behind were also
afraid.

They knew that this was no ordinary trip to
Jerusalem.

This is the third time that Jesus has spoken
about his death.

It's not normal to talk about your upcoming
death.

He's young and healthy so why would he die.

And if it's the religious authorities who are going to kill him why are they going up to Jerusalem anyway.

(pause)

The second time Jesus told them they didn't understand what he was saying

And they were afraid to ask him.

Their fear has only grown as time has passed.

Fear for what would happen to their beloved teacher and friend Jesus.

And we see that fear here at the third mention of his impending death.

(pause)

Are we as afraid as the people were then?

Do we feel that sense of impending doom

That the end is coming.

(pause)

We are on that journey with Jesus,

With the disciples,

With the crowds,

And we need to try and experience this as they did.

They didn't know what would happen after Jesus died.

If Jesus dies while in Jerusalem then everything is over.

That's the end.

Let's take a few moments to try and imagine ourselves in that crowd following Jesus.

Let's close our eyes and picture the scene

(silence)

Look around you and see all the people that are following Jesus.

Men and women.

Young and old.

Well dressed and poor.

It's not just the 12 disciples that are following.

(silence)

Feel their fear.

Hear the whisperings between the people
about what is happening.

About what might happen when they get to
Jerusalem.

(silence)

Look ahead a bit and see the 12 disciples.

They are walking quickly.

See the distress and worry on their faces.

(silence)

Up ahead further still you see Jesus.

Striding ahead,

All alone,

He's in a hurry to get to Jerusalem.

He's in a hurry to get things over with.

(silence)

He stops

Turns to his disciples

And takes them aside to speak to them alone.

(silence)

Work your way through the crowd.

Move over to where Jesus and the 12 are.

Get into a position where you can hear what he is saying.

(silence)

"Listen,"

he told them,

"we are going up to Jerusalem where the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the teachers of the Law.

They will condemn him to death

and then hand him over to the Gentiles,

who will make fun of him, spit on him, whip him, and kill him;

but three days later he will rise to life."

(pause)

Look at the shock on the disciples' faces.

See how their alarm turns into fear.

Their beloved leader is going to die.

Their beloved friend will soon be hanging on a cross. **(longish silence)**

But wait there is a glimmer of hope in what he says.

‘three days later he will rise to life.’

What’s that all about.

Does Jesus really mean he is going to come back to life.

It’s not that long since he’s raised Lazarus from the dead.

Will it be like that for Jesus.

(silence)

Think about what Jesus has just said.

‘three days later he will rise to life.’

(silence)

Father help us to hold onto these words.

Three days later you will rise to life.

That death on the cross is not the end for Jesus.

Help us to have faith Father.

Help us to believe,

To know that Jesus will rise again.

To know that Jesus is alive now.

Living with you in glory.

(pause)

Lead us, O God, to a new realm.

To look towards the light.

To let go of fear and hear you calling again.

To travel the difficult path of the cross,
knowing that you travel with us.

Help us Father hear you calling to us.

Come.

Follow.

Walk the way.

And we will follow you Father,

On the journey into the light.

Amen.