

A new mind, a new way of thinking, of being, of doing. Or as we say in these times a new normal.

All three readings today speak of something new, something unexpected, and something not always welcome.

Jeremiah tells us that he has been seduced by God, and is now a laughing stock. He's tried to resist but it's no good. God has entered his life permanently and there's no going back. Any attempt to turn back the clock he says is like a fire burning within that he could not bear.

Paul, writing to the Romans, teaches them to act according to their new mind, and not their old ways. And that new mind is the mind of Christ himself which they, and we, have received in Baptism, enlivened by the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, and nourished in the Holy Eucharist.

Peter, in the gospel, so soon after Jesus naming him last Sunday as the 'rock on which He will build His church', suffers a big reverse. No doubt, like Jeremiah, he felt a bit of a laughing stock, now being called Satan in front of all the disciples. But he and the disciples needed a new mind, the mind of Christ that says 'take up your cross and follow me, even to Jerusalem.'

Those who've been journeying with me throughout the time of COVID know that I reject the word 'normal' in the phrase 'new normal'. This isn't normal; a survival mode is not true living and flourishing; and social distancing does damage to the Christian understanding of the human person, namely that we are made for communion and connection with God and with one another. Viewing everyone else as a potential threat and keeping my distance from them is an injury to the body of Christ.

But the requirements of this time are certainly 'new', or at least new to us; going back in history previous generations experienced much worse. And this is certainly a cross that we take up each day. Let us pray, and I pray this first for myself, that we can take up this cross with good grace, that we find new reserves of charity, neighbourliness and good humour to carry us through the challenge of the new school term, returning to workplaces, and the Autumn and Winter seasons ahead.

Much like Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, the road is long and the outcome uncertain. It's a marathon and not a sprint. Let us trust in the Lord and in His grace, take up our cross, which is but a small part of His Great Cross, walk with Him with steadfast heart, renewing our commitment each day. As Saint John Henry Newman put it in his hymn 'Lead, kindly light': 'Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step enough for me.'