

Friends

This Sunday as we follow our Lenten liturgy, we will place the bag of coins on the cross. The first two weeks, we remember what Christ gave to us: first his body and blood in the bread and the wine, and secondly his loving, servant-kingliness as we recall his washing his disciples' feet with the bowl and the towel. Now we turn from his giving to the human response and the first one is the bag of coins. This represents the 30 pieces of silver that Judas was paid for betraying Christ. Why 30? Well, that was the price of an adult male slave at that time and in that place. So the King of Kings, the Son of God, is sold and the price is the price of any adult male at the time.

We are given so much in our own lives: education, access to healthcare free at the point of need, freedom to practice our faith. The rule of law, public utilities, rubbish collection, fire brigade response to our need and so on are all a part of our lives that is so obvious to us, that we only really notice it when something goes wrong. Yet I wonder whether, in response to all these good things, we too are tempted to sell some people down the river? It is so easy to judge some as not deserving, so easy to be frustrated by other people's needs, so easy to want to exclude some people from the good stuff.

Jesus will go on walking this uncomfortable path from now all the way to Good Friday. We will remember that after he is sold, he is whipped, tormented and ultimately crucified. It is easy to forget that these things were not unique to him, but are common practices used for millennia to subjugate people and to gain power and wealth through the suffering of others. This story is the story of the Son of God who came to this earth to suffer and die so that our sins might be atoned for, but it is also the story of humanity and our constant need to have more than we deserve and to control the world around us. As we continue our Lenten journey, the understanding that we are as much like the Pharisees as we are like the disciples, unpalatable though it is, is an important one. It reminds us that seeking to walk in Jesus footsteps is not an easy thing to do and that our very humanity draws us towards a more selfish outlook. It also

reminds us that we have a pattern to follow and strength to draw on when we seek to follow the Jesus way.

God bless, Vicci