

The long shadow of the cross covers everything now. The time is drawing near. As the clouds gather and the light dims, the smells of death heighten. Frankincense. Hyssop. Myrrh. Sour wine and vinegar. The stench of sweat and fear. Blood. It is a gloomy and frightening business, this Lent.

It is only the promise of Sunday that keeps us going.

The darkness can be overwhelming. It can cover everything, making all around us indistinguishable, unseeable, unknowable. Panic sets in. A sense of lostness. This Criss cross shadow is of the deepest, densest, night. It can simply swallow us whole.

It is only the promise of Sunday that keeps us going.

Things happen to us: Our parents die, sometimes horribly. They get sick, sometimes horribly. Our partners die, always too early. They get sick, always too early. Our children die, always tragically. They get sick, always tragically. We get sick. It hurts. It is frustrating. It is frightening. It is constant. Our grandchildren, our great grandchildren. We worry. We find out we die. That rocks us.

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Our eyesight goes, as does our hearing. We can't walk as far as we did. We can't carry much. We can't bend and turn and twist as we used too. Our backs, knees, ankles and necks hurt all the time. Our balance is not there. We stoop and stumble, need a cane or a frame or sometimes even a chair. We are not allowed to drive or go out at night. The world is a scarier place than it was.

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We get depressed, our mental health fails us. We feel too small or too big. We see or hear things that others don't. We forget stuff. Where we live, what we were doing, what we did, who those people are, what our name is.

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People hurt and damage us. They break our trust and love and confidence. They are not what we expect. They are cruel and unkind. They leave us out, marginalise us. They are mean to us. They cheat us, steal from us, take advantage of us, lie to us. They let us down. They sin against us.

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Our dreams are broken or put on hold. Our money runs out. We cannot afford to buy a house. We lose our employment. Our business goes under. Our marriage comes apart. Friendship's end. Families spilt at the seams. We are lonely. Adversity robs us of our golden years.

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God writes Gods' laws on our hearts, but they are hard to remember and even harder to keep. Jesus prays and supplicates with loud cries and tears, he suffers, faces death, a grain falls into the ground and then dies. He indicates the kind of death he is to die. It is and he does.

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Amen.