

## Pastoral letter 18<sup>th</sup> March

Dear friends,

As I was driving through the country lanes a couple of days ago I suddenly had to stop. As I got out of my car and walked toward the old wooden gate in the field, the sparrows chattered in the hedgerows, almost as if they were gossiping about me, wondering what I was doing. I had to stop, because out of the corner of my eye I'd glimpsed something, a scene that was just simply idyllic. I just had to get out and have a closer look. There in the field were what seemed like hundreds of new born lambs frolicking about in the beautifully warm spring sunshine, innocent of all of the drama that's happening in the world. My eyes were drawn to one little lamb however, that was seemingly sat all alone. After a few minutes I was getting a bit concerned, until that is its mother came trundling over, responding to its bleats, and gave it a nuzzle. Within a few moments it was up on its feet dancing a jig.

It's moments like these that we are blessed with in living as we do with wonderful countryside around us. As I stood looking over the gate at the unfolding scene of new life in front of me, my thoughts were taken to when John the Baptist sees Jesus coming along the road and says to the people near him; "Behold the lamb of God." (John 1 v29). We might find it difficult to reconcile at first John the Baptist calling Jesus a lamb, until that is we are aware that those around him would have immediately understand the metaphor, as at that time it was often a lamb that was used to offer some form of sacrifice.

In my training to become a priest, over 15 years ago now, I went as some of you might already know, to the College of the Resurrection in Mirfield, which has as its symbol a lamb carrying a flag. The lamb representing Jesus upon the cross in and through his crucifixion, and the flag representing the triumph and glory through the resurrection.

In the communion service at Church we sometimes hear the priest who's leading the service say, just before we receive the bread which is the body of Christ; "Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Blessed are those who are called to his supper." And the people in the congregation respond by saying; "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed."

I finally made myself leave the gate of the field, leaving behind me the scene of the frolicking new born lambs, only then to realise on looking down at my watch, that I'd been standing there for almost an hour! I pray that as we prepare to move towards the beginning of Passiontide this Sunday, we may all, individually and together, know the beauty and love of the Lamb of God which is limitless and timeless.

Love & prayers

Revd Neil

