Dear friend
I am pleased to enclose the virtual service for Sunday.

A couple of hymns (feel free to join in!)…

Take up thy cross, to the tune Breslau, sung by the choir of North Stoneham and Bassett church:

https://youtu.be/t5xlxaesqQg

Make me a channel of your peace, very precisely sung by Dragon School choir, Oxford, for the School choir of the year competition:

https://youtu.be/2svZhZT6Pro

A blue grass version of the revival hymn At the Cross:

https://youtu.be/N-lDWpmo6GA

One of the warhorses of the cathedral repertoire, John Ireland's Greater love hath no man; a patchy work in an Elgarian style, but the last bit is a magical setting of words that fit today's theme. Herewith a rolling score for choristers to sing along to:

https://youtu.be/d0JL0OgUqgg

Finally, many thanks to Martin for this worship song, Todd Galberth - Open the Eyes Of My Heart Lord, a lovely version of Paul Baloche's prayerful song:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcf_iyz3GK8

With every blessing
Chris

SERVICE FOR 28th.FEBRUARY 2021
THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.
How cruel people become when animated not by God's Spirit but by the spirit of getting ahead in the world! *Oscar Romero*.

CONFESSION Save us, O God, from the blindness, which is not even aware that it is sinning; from the pride, which cannot admit that it is wrong; from the self-will, which can see nothing but its own way; from the self-righteousness, which can see no flaw in itself. *Give us, at all times, eyes which are open to our own faults, a conscience which is sensitive and quick to warn, a heart which cannot sin in peace, but which is moved to regret and remorse. William Barclay*.

COLLECT Almighty God, you show to those who are in error the light of your truth, that they may return to the way of righteousness. Grant to all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may reject those things that are contrary to their profession and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

READINGS Genesis 17.1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22.23-end; Romans 4.13-end; Mark 8.31-end.

REFLECTION Jesus' disciples must have been buoyed up by travelling with him, his acts of healing and inspirational teaching. They would have shared Peter's expectation that the Messiah, the anointed one, would restore the earthly fortunes of Israel, just as God had previously brought them out of Egypt. As we do so often, they missed the point and tried to recreate God in their own image. Peter tried to dissuade Jesus from his journey to the cross and received a stern rebuke in turn. Jesus' self-denial, his submission to his Father's will, was in human terms a failure and not the triumphant outcome Peter and the other disciples expected.
History is full of religious zealots who pursue their own agenda as a substitute for God's will. They include a man called Saul, who persecuted many Christians who deviated from his precise interpretation of the Law. Yet, renamed Paul, he later emphasized that faith is paramount. He commended the faith that Abraham and Sarah achieved, enabling them to obey God's will.
When Mark wrote his gospel, he would have witnessed followers of Jesus literally carrying their cross to be executed. Even today, people are being tortured and executed for their faith in the Middle East and elsewhere. We are more likely to meet indifference or polite pity. Lent is a good time for us to re-examine our relationship with God. Are we trying to tame him, to fit him into our comfortable lifestyle, or can we have the courage to abandon our lives to him, to take up the risky challenge of the cross in self-denying service to others?

PRAYERS The things, Lord, that we pray for, give us the grace to labour for. *Thomas More*
God of illumination, you call us beyond our imagining to tasks beyond our powers. Empower our service and enlighten our worship that we may know and proclaim the light of the world. *Joy Tetley.*
We pray for your church in this world, especially bringing before you those who face persecution and ridicule in your name. Comfort and heal all those who are sick in mind, body or spirit, those who have to bear the cross of chronic pain or mental illness, the lonely and rejected; especially we pray for… Guide us on our spiritual journey, supporting us when we stumble on stony paths. Walk alongside us when the going is tough and share with us the beautiful views, the moments of joy, glimpses of your glory.

We say the **LORD'S PRAYER**
We share the **GRACE.**

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.
(from The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost).