

requires that we follow the One whose voice we hear. That voice has graciously invited us to no longer content ourselves with what we know and with what we have and with what we have come to believe. That voice calls us beyond our comfort level to embrace new opportunities and see that as a cross prepared for us from the very beginnings. That voice calls us to leave all behind and empty ourselves in the faith that our empty hands and hearts will be filled with the grace waiting for us. That voice calls us to grow out of our idolatries and into a companionship with the One who accompanies us in this journey of cross bearing.

### *I Will Sing As I Journey*

Eight Meditations on the Seven Words from the Cross  
Canon Jim Irvine

THE THREE HOUR SERVICE—GOOD FRIDAY  
April 2, 2010  
Noon—3:00 P.M.

Christ Church (Parish) Church  
Westmorland Street, Fredericton

# St Thomas' Church

Anglican Parish of Stanley • Diocese of Fredericton

Ash Wednesday—February 17, 2010

## *A Journey Begun*

Canon Jim Irvine  
*Celebrant and Preacher*

*We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes, an ancient sign, speaking of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, and marking the penitence of the community as a whole.*

Book of Alternatives Service, 282

**B**us depots can be a busy place. We can be jostled as travelers arrive late and queue up for their tickets. Others pour out of arrivals, stretching their legs and gaining their bearings. Luggage is emptied and collected. Some arrive only to hail a taxi and depart while others climb into the bus and seek out a seat. Some are going somewhere while others are arriving; some are simply meeting arrivals or saying good-byes. Some are just staying where they are.

Airports are a lot like that. With heightened security there is more segregation, but the experience is the same.

Travelers know the routine. Partings sprinkled with tears are witnessed in the departure lounge while greetings finding a welcoming embrace are found in the arrival area. Carousels empty suitcases to vigilant time-wearied travelers and on the concourse new arrivals pass departing patrons. But not everyone is going somewhere. Some are just content to be where they are.

Some people just get behind the wheel of their car. Snow birds migrating to southern climes are detected at the border with passport in hand and suitcases in the trunk. Others simply stay home.



But for all of the traveling done by many of us I suspect that few have undertaken a journey. Trips for us have beginnings and endings and on achieving our destination, we unpack our bags. We may be visitors and for a short time we will explore new places and enjoy the company of family and friends. If we've arrived home then there's a laundry to be done. The trip is over.

The journey was never begun.

My journey began in snow. Closing the door behind me, I shook the snow from my feet. The vestibule was chilled and my breath appeared like clouds of incense as I unbuttoned my overcoat and loosened my scarf. I combed my fingers through my hair and brushed the snow off my shoulders. I opened the door into the nave and entered.

In the evening darkness only street light entered the stained glass windows. The lighting in the nave appeared

low and it took a moment for me to recognize the layout. Men and women occupied the nave sparsely. Music filled the space and the deep notes of the organ played the Baptist's mantra by Stephen Schwartz – prepare ye the way of the Lord! I took a seat, near the aisle and close to the back, and knelt.



The pungent aroma of burning palm reached me as clouds of smoke climbed up and became lost in the rafters. This was no incense offering. These prayers carried to the Throne of Grace were petitions not of supplication or even thanksgiving but of beginnings – at the outset of a journey. A priest stood in the chancel, feeding a brass brazier with palm crosses, souvenirs of a Triumphal Entry of a day long past. The journey that led Jesus into Jerusalem was being joined this evening by a handful of disciples that knew the story and how it ends. But for knowing the story we were no longer content to be where we are. We were about to begin a journey – together.

Remember, O Man, you are dust. The pressure of the thumb on my forehead tracing the seal of my baptism reminded me of my mortality and of my eternal life. The contradictions of life found special expression in the shape of a cross. And to dust you will return. So teach us to number our days, we echo the Psalmist. Not for our reward, but to measure our path and the length of days that fills our journey.

The challenge is an invitation. Take up your cross, and follow me – words that resound over and through and beyond the formula expressed by the priest. The journey