

## NEWSLETTER 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020

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My dear Parishioners

As I write this newsletter, I can scarcely believe that we are coming to the end of the tenth week of lockdown. The good news is that the government is trying hard to help the country ease out of lockdown and small steps are being taken to help us return to some sort of normality, whilst being vigilant against the return of a second wave.

But the number of cases globally is 5.87 million and the number of deaths is 362,000. That is a huge increase from the figures quoted last week at this time. So, the virus is still very much present in our world- there are still so many people who are seriously ill, who have died, families and friends who are grieving. Let us remember them all in our prayers.

We are still hoping that the churches may be able to open for private prayer- perhaps from the beginning of July, though only at certain times and on certain days. The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales is still working with the government to see what might be possible. It will be a very complicated process because the safety of everyone must be guaranteed. As I wrote last week, we would need to have stewards to ensure that all the rules were being followed. I just would like to ask you all again to reflect on whether you might consider volunteering as a steward for the limited times that the church would be open. Obviously if you are in one of the vulnerable categories due to health issues or age, you would not be eligible because you would be at risk. If you think that you could help our church to open, could you please email your name and contact details to me. Thank you so much to those people who have already done so.

Some news from one of our parishioners, Marie Pennel. She writes, "I completed my half marathon last Saturday in 2 hrs 6 min thank you to all who sponsored me through my Justgiving page and by cheques made payable to Cafod. £2302 was raised which will be used by Cafod to support their work abroad during the Coronavirus Pandemic helping with water, hygiene and sanitation programmes. Your support is greatly appreciated."

This Sunday we celebrate Pentecost- the coming of the Holy Spirit on the apostles. This feast brings to completion the celebration of the Paschal Mystery - the Suffering, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, his Ascension into heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Church has 'stretched' the celebration of this great mystery over 7 weeks, so Pentecost marks the end of what we call Eastertide.

Pentecost is such a beautiful Feast- the Holy Spirit comes down upon the apostles and changes them forever. From a frightened cowardly group of people, gathered together in one room, they become fearless witnesses to the Resurrection of Christ. They are no longer afraid to proclaim the reality of who Jesus is. They are not afraid to proclaim that Jesus is Lord and that he is alive. Indeed, we sometimes call Pentecost the birthday of the Church because it is from that moment on that the Good News begins to spread, first around the Mediterranean world, from Jerusalem to Rome, then outwards across the world, right down through the centuries, to wherever we are reading this from now- Princes Risborough for most of us.

I think it is so beautiful and inspiring to think we are all connected to that moment when the Spirit comes down in tongues of fire. That same Spirit is with us today, deep inside our hearts. Through the power of the Spirit we can have a warm, close relationship with God and spread that Good news to those we come in contact with.

There are many beautiful things one could reflect about the readings for this Sunday. But as I was reflecting on them, and on what is happening in our world today, I felt I would just like to focus on one aspect. The gospel is John 20: 19-23. Jesus appears to the little group of frightened, terrified, distressed disciples. He breathes his peace on them, '**Peace be with you**', and then he gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We read in that gospel passage that '**the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews**'. We have too, on the whole, been living behind closed doors for the past ten weeks, because of the lockdown, when we were asked to stay at home. I am sure we all felt frightened and anxious. And even as the lockdown starts to lift, if we are honest, we probably still have those feelings. In fact, our hearts can be locked. What has turned the key? Perhaps fear, anxiety, a sense of our own sinfulness, loneliness, worries, feeling betrayed... any of these feelings/situations and many others can lock the door of our hearts.

But just as he did to the disciples, Jesus comes into that locked space of our hearts and breathes upon us, giving us the Holy Spirit, the spirit of truth, peace and joy. Jesus says, '**Peace be with you**' to each one of us. And notice that, in the presence of Jesus, the disciples are '**filled with joy**'. When Jesus is present, he always brings joy and peace. Always.

Perhaps during your prayer this week, you might just focus for a time on that word **PEACE**. Ask Jesus to fill you with peace. Let that word, with all that it means, touch you and fill you. Rest in that word. Let that word touch all the areas and situations in your life where you need the peace of Jesus. Let that word open the locked door of your heart.

And whenever those negative feelings threaten to overwhelm you, then ask Jesus to send the Spirit of peace into your heart. The Spirit will always come to our help.

And then share that peace that you have received with others, perhaps through a prayer, a thought, even a phone call.

I hope you will all have a good week. Stay strong and have courage! Once again please be assured that you are very much in my heart as I celebrate my daily mass and I pray for you each day in my daily prayers.

I end with this lovely verse from St Paul's letter to the Romans 15:13. It is a beautiful blessing for us all.

'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in your faith, so that in the power of the Holy Spirit, you may be rich in hope.'

May God bless you all

Fr Lijo