

NEWSLETTER 10th May 2020

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My dear Parishioners

We are already approaching the 5th Sunday of Easter. We have been living under lockdown since 23rd March. The Prime Minister will address the nation on Sunday 10th May. We will have to wait until then to see when and how the lockdown could be lifted. However, since we now have the highest number of deaths in Europe and since this disease is so deadly and infectious, it seems more than likely that there will only be a very small easing of restrictions to begin with in order to protect the population, especially the elderly and the vulnerable. A second wave could be catastrophic. But let's wait and see...

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, calls what we are living through now '**a time of trial**'. It is a very good word to describe the difficulties we are experiencing- not seeing family and friends, money problems, worries about losing our jobs, health worries etc. But one of the biggest sufferings that we have are our closed churches. It is a particularly difficult time.

The Metropolitan Archbishops of the Catholic Church of England and Wales have written a very powerful message to all the faithful. They begin that message with a beautiful statement. "The radiance of the risen Lord shines upon us. At a time when so many shadows are cast into our lives, and upon our world, the light of the resurrection shines forever to renew and restore our hope."

As I celebrate my mass every morning, with the Paschal candle burning strongly, I will pray for that light to shine in your hearts and to renew your hope that this 'time of trial' will end. Be assured that I never forget you and I pray every day for all your intentions.

The Archbishops have reassured us very powerfully that they understand the pain of all the faithful who cannot go to mass or receive the Sacraments. You are all remembered every day in masses all over the United Kingdom and indeed in the world. So even if we are separated, we remain united spiritually and I do hope you will take great comfort from their message.

“Our faith is expressed powerfully and beautifully though ‘seeing, touching, and tasting.’ We know that every bishop and every priest recognises the pain of Catholics who, at present, cannot pray in church or receive the sacraments. This weighs heavily on our hearts. We are deeply moved by the Eucharistic yearning expressed by so many members of the faithful. We thank you sincerely for your love for the Lord Jesus, present in the sacraments and supremely so in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The bishops and priests of every diocese are remembering you and your loved ones at Mass each day in our churches as we pray ‘in hope of health and well-being.’ We thank our priests for this faithfulness to their calling.”

I think that the gospel for this Sunday, the fifth Sunday of Easter is particularly meaningful for us. When we listen to or read the words of Scripture, we know that Jesus is really speaking to us, yes to each one of us personally. This Sunday’s gospel is John 14:1-12. The whole passage is so rich and beautiful, but I would just like to pick out 2 sentences that I think might bring us comfort and strength as we move into this week.

Jesus says to us: **‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still and trust in me.’**

Which one of us does not have a heart that is troubled- our fears, our anxieties, our worries, our problems, our difficulties... I could go on. How comforting to hear Jesus say to each one of us

Do not let your heart be troubled Trust in my father and trust in me.

He calls each one of us by name and speaks those healing words to us.

Why not spend some time just quietly repeating those words and allowing them to resonate deep in your hearts. Allow them to touch you at the innermost core of your being.

This passage from John's Gospel contains another of the 'I am' statements.

(As I mentioned in last week's newsletter, in the book of Exodus, when Moses asked God his name, the reply was 'I am who I am'. So, when Jesus says 'I am...' he is telling us, quite simply, that he is divine. He is God. And the pictures and images in the 'I am' sayings used by Jesus show us the face of God- a face of tenderness and compassion.)

Jesus says to us: **'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.'**

Dominic Raab, in the update on Thursday 7th May, told us that the Prime Minister would set out a **road map** for the easing of the lockdown.

When Jesus tells us he is **the Way**, he is telling us that he is our **road map** to guide us safely through life. He alone is the sure pathway that can guide us. In the midst of all the uncertainties and the unknown future that we are facing, we can cling to him. We can be sure of him. We can feel safe with him. He will never let us down.

I am **the Truth**- Jesus never deceives us. How much false news do we read today? How many people tell us half-truths, how many people can we really count on? But Jesus is the Truth- we can trust every word that he speaks to us.

I am **the Life**- only with Jesus can we find real life, real fulfilment. And it is in following him that we will eventually reach our true homeland in heaven and experience eternal joy and peace.

I hope these words from the Gospel will bring you comfort and strength in whatever situations you have to face this week.

And may our Blessed Mother Mary pray with us and for us that we may all draw closer to her Son.

I end with this lovely blessing

God's love surround you, God's Spirit guide you,
God's whisper cheer you, God's peace calm you,
God's shield protect you, God's wisdom arm you,
wherever God may lead you. Amen.

May God bless you all.

Fr Lijo