

!



Wednesday 8 April 2020



Wednesday of Holy Week

Dear Friends

Lent is almost over and the joy and hope of Easter is just days away. Will our experience of Easter feel muted by the ongoing reality of COVID-19? It will be a different Easter certainly, and our separation from one another continues to be painful. But everywhere I look, I see, not only the signs of new life in Spring around me, but countless examples of loving service sustaining and supporting our communities. COVID-19 is a huge challenge and tragedy, but as with all such traumas, love surfaces in abundance. That love is the love of Christ, a love that goes by many names and none, but remains Christ-like all the same.

Morning Prayer during Passiontide begins with this prayer:

Blessed are you, Lord God of our salvation,
to you be praise and glory for ever.
As a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief
your only Son was lifted up
that he might draw the whole world to himself.
May we walk this day in the way of the cross
and always be ready to share its weight,
declaring your love for all the world.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be God for ever.

Every time I read the words – *As a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief* – any sense I might have of being alone with my feelings and experiences is washed away in an instant. Whatever life throws at us, Jesus has been there first. And then later in the prayer a second phrase of equal impact – *may we walk this day in the way of the cross and always be ready to share its weight*. Share – not carry. Again, a reminder that we are not alone. There's gospel work to be done but we do it in the company of Jesus.

One of the realities of Easter that we easily overlook in ordinary times, is that for the first disciples Easter wasn't all chocolate eggs and bunny rabbits. The joy of experiencing Jesus on Easter morning was muted for some, confusing for others, doubt-ridden for even more. So, if you find your emotions all over the place this Easter you are probably far closer to the experiences of the first disciples than you ever usually are as we celebrate the resurrection.

!

As I have said so often these past few weeks, go gently with yourself and with those closest to you. We are living through difficult times and it's not easy.

A few bits and pieces of news...

For Holy Week this year I am giving talks during the daily service on the set gospel readings for the day from John. These are being added to the web site gradually on the sermons page here:

<https://bromsgroveparish.org.uk/Groups/335776/Sermons.aspx>. Please ask for a paper copy if you would prefer. You will need a bible to hand to make the most of the talks.

I have been enjoying hugely the online Messy Church that Kerstin McDonald and others have created on the St Godwald's Facebook pages – facebook.com/stgodwalds. Each day there has been a guided craft activity on an Easter theme. Yesterday's was painting stones as a reminder of the tomb...



It's a brilliant way to offer families an alternative to meeting one another face to face in the hall. We long to be back together, but in the meantime, this will sustain us! Thank you!

Usually we would have a service every day in Holy Week but that isn't possible this year. This means there is no Service of Light on Holy Saturday/Easter Eve. But...you can do your own thing! So, why not light a candle and put it in your window or, if you are feeling more ambitious and can keep safe, why not light a fire or BBQ in the garden and carry the light of Christ into your darkened home, much as we would carry the newly lit Paschal Candle into church on Easter Eve. Jesus Christ is the Light of the World.

Liz and I are having the week off after Easter so there won't be a pastoral letter next week, nor will there be an online service from me on Sunday 19th. However, there are plenty of local and national alternatives to consider. The most local is Revd Ray Khan at St John's who is regularly posting recorded services onto the St John's You Tube channel. You can view Ray's services here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgjsUILLu84Vq1IOVGbrbHUQ>. Nationally, the Church of England is live streaming a service every Sunday and the details of this can be found on their web site at <https://www.churchofengland.org/>. Then, of course, there is TV and radio and details of some of their programmes may be contained in the weekly newsletters.

!

As I write this there is no certainty at all as to when the restrictions on our lives are going to be eased. I'm therefore trying to think up more and more new things we can offer one another as a way of supporting and sustaining our faith communities. If you would like to be more involved in our online worship for instance, then please give me a call or drop me a note. Now we've worked out the basics, it is getting easier and easier for us all. The second thought is that as many of you know I love books and love reading. I wonder, is there a way we could begin a book club during these challenging months? Let's share some ideas. Book reviews on the parish web site would be one option.

Whether you are spending Easter alone or in the company of others, be assured you are supported by the prayers of the worldwide church, as well as by your fellow Christian brothers and sisters in Bromsgrove.

May you know the peace, joy and hope of the resurrection this Easter!

With continuing love and prayers,

David Ford

Rector

01527 873831

revdavidford@googlemail.com