

Eastertide 2020

Dear Everyone at St Peter's

I do hope that everyone is managing to keep well and not become too burdened in this difficult time. I hope too that we all managed in one way or another to ponder the great mysteries of the last days of Our Lord's life and the joys of the Resurrection.

I understand that the Bishop of Dover has said that one of the good things to come out of these present times is that we are worshipping more at home. I hope that we are finding it possible to do this. And now I want to briefly repeat what I said last week about one way we might think of worshipping on Sundays and perhaps sometime in the week.

We are all different and I would not wish anyone to change a pattern of devotion that they find helpful.

Forgive the old - fashioned language I am about to use, and note that 'he' includes she, but this is the one statement about these matters that the Church of England has made. These words come from the 1552 and 1662 Books of Common Prayer in the service for the Communion of the Sick. If anyone for what ever reason is unable to receive communion, then the priest "shall instruct him that if he do truly repent him of his sins, and steadfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the cross for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving him hearty thanks therefore; he doth eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth."

This is known as spiritual communion. One way of doing this in practice is this:

Sit down quietly, maybe at a table, maybe light a candle. Say a preparatory prayer, maybe the collect for purity "Almighty God unto whom all hearts be open..." If you have the collect for the day pray that.. The read one or two of the readings for the day. Then a time of prayer saying sorry, thanking God, praying for others and oneself. Then imagine the taking of the bread and wine, the thanking God over the bread and

wine, the breaking of the bread. Say the Our Father. Then imagine receiving the Bread of life and receiving the Cup of Salvation. Then saying a prayer of thanksgiving and the Grace.

Here is a prayer to say just before we imagine receiving the Bread and Wine: "O Lord Jesus Christ, since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I humbly pray that you would come spiritually to my soul. Come, Lord Jesus, come and cleanse me, heal me, strengthen me, and unite me to yourself, now and for evermore. Amen."

Suitable readings might be: Easter 2 April 19<sup>th</sup> Acts 2. 22 – 32 1 Peter 1. 3 – 9 John 20. 19 - 31

Easter 3 April 26<sup>th</sup> Acts 2. 36 – 41 1 Peter 1. 17 – 23 Luke 24. 13 - 35

Easter 4 May 3<sup>rd</sup> Acts 2. 42 – 47 1 Peter 2. 19 – 25 John 10. 1 – 10

These three gospels give us much food for thought: St Thomas doubting and then acknowledging Jesus as 'My Lord and God'. Jesus making himself known to the disciples on the road to Emmaus as he explained the Scriptures and made himself known in the breaking of the bread. Jesus as the Good Shepherd helping us and challenging us in these difficult times.

In these times there is much for us to pray about. Here are some suggestions – many more can be added:

- everyone suffering from coronavirus
- their families and friends especially those unable to be with those severely ill and at the end of their lives
- the NHS staff and Care Home staff as they seek to help everyone who is ill often in such difficult conditions
- everyone who is mourning the death of a loved one; those for whom the funeral is not quite what they wished for; those unable to attend a funeral
- all government ministers and officials, all health service administrators as they face challenging situations both immediately and in the immediate and longer term future

- everyone who is staying at home, those living on their own, particularly those finding it difficult and those persons caring for children and for other persons without help
- everyone keeping essential services going

I do miss our gatherings at St Peter's on Sundays and Tuesdays very much. I am very fortunate that Kitty and I can celebrate the Eucharist at home and we do this at 10.45 am on Sundays and 11 am on Wednesdays. As we do this we pray especially for everyone at St Peter's as well as everyone through the world whose lives have been so cruelly disrupted by this virus. I do hope soon we may gather in church again. Barry has changed the altar frontals and other things in St Peter's so they all celebrate our moving from Lent into Easter.

We send everyone our best wishes and continue to pray for God's blessing and guidance on us all.

Fr Chris

14<sup>th</sup> April 2020