

Holy Week and Easter 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.

In the middle of the second world war the French writer, Albert Camus, wrote a book called 'The Plague'. It is about a plague, cholera, infecting the Algerian city of Oran. The book contains many conversations between an unbelieving doctor and a priest who are great friends. While there is much they disagree about they both agree that the plague is caused by the freedom all creation has and that what matters is that people respond to the plague with love and generosity, some actively, some by our bearing.

I want to make one or two suggestions as to how we might keep this Holy Week and Easter. 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: Maundy Thursday: 1 Corinthians 11.23 – 26 & John 13. 1 – 17 and 31 – 35.

19. 1 – 30) Good Friday John chapters 18 & 19 (or

– 18 Easter Day Acts 10. 34 – 43 & John 20. 1

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 (but this week we will move to Maundy Thursdays). 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.

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

Fr Chris