



My Dear Friends in Christ,

Each day, as I say the Office and pray the Eucharist in St. Ninian's, our empty churches remind me how fortunate I am to be able to go to church and make Eucharist on our behalf. Our list of prayer intentions is growing and more help would be appreciated. If you would like to help please join our Prayer Chain (contact Sandra Walsh tel.01557 331596 or email sandrawalshkbt@yahoo.com).

One window in church has particularly sustained me – the beautiful St. Ninian window. St. Ninian is depicted in the entrance of his cave, his wilderness, looking to his church from afar. For him, I imagine, it would have been a blessed release to escape the daily routine and be alone with God. For those of you in 'isolation' the chance to go to church and also to feel the wind and sun on your face might be just a dream too far. For all of us this time of 'lockdown' is testing, but perhaps more so for some than others. There is a saying that you may find helpful during these troubled times from the Desert Fathers:

*Abba Agathon said, 'I have never offered agapes; but the fact of giving and receiving has been for me an agape, for I consider my brother the good of my brother to be a sacrificial offering.'*¹

I realise that you will be missing the Sacrament, but perhaps the way of Abba Agathon may help you come to terms with where you are. New situations are difficult to come to terms with, and there is much talk of how things will 'never be the same again'. I am reminded of the saying of Heraclitus 'that you cannot step in the same river twice'. Perhaps Trigger from Only Fools and Horses when talking about his broom said it all: he had his broom for 20 years, during which time he replaced the head 17 times and the handle 14! We think of things and habits as being permanent, but in truth our lives evolve. This current

¹ The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, Abba Agathon 17 p.23

Christ Church, Dalbeattie & St. Ninian's Castle, Douglas

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Newsletter No. 3

3rd, April, 2020

evolution is perhaps more radical than we might care for. Thus the need to pray for ourselves, and each other. These are truly testing times!

Helen Evans (one of our Lay Readers) and I have been working on an Address for each day of Holy Week starting with Palm Sunday. We hope that they will help you in your observance of this most important week in the Christian year. If anyone would like a printed copy please let me know and I will do my best to get a copy to you. (If you can print off your own copy that would be appreciated thank you).

I will also endeavour to distribute Blessed Palm Crosses. It would be helpful if there are some volunteers to help with the distribution. Please contact me on 01556 505894.

Our contemporary culture, has to my mind, kept suffering largely out of sight. There has been little desire to shed light on such suffering and pain. Perhaps the term 'self-isolation' is changing that? In the West our Liturgies have kept suffering and rejection very much to the fore. Artists have used death, and pain as a common theme. Here is perhaps one of the greatest pictures to depict misery and death. It is by Rogier van der Weyden. You may find it helpful as an image, as we walk together – though separately – through Holy Week in the Way of the Cross to Easter.



Can you work out who the people are in the picture?

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If Easter was just about suffering I do not think our great festival would have survived. I wonder what image or picture you would use to depict Resurrection life? Perhaps you would like to send me examples that we might share in next week's Newsletter?

I came across this quotation that you may find helpful. I like to think of it as a prayer when we are tested by ageing and sickness:

When the signs of age begin to mark my body (and still more when they touch my mind); when the ill that is to diminish me or carry me off strikes from without or is born within me; when the painful moment comes in which I suddenly awaken to the fact that I am ill or growing old; and above all at that last moment when I feel I am losing hold of myself and am absolutely passive within the hands of the great unknown forces that have formed me; in all these dark moments, O God, grant that I may understand that it is you (provided my faith is strong enough) who are painfully parting the fibres of my being in order to penetrate to the very marrow of my substance and bear me away within yourself. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ,
The Divine Milieu

As I finish this letter the Dawn Chorus is singing: A new day is dawning.
A God given day. Let us enjoy it...

May God continue to Bless and keep you safe.

Yours in Christ

Christopher

Sunday Worship, broadcast every Sunday on Radio 4 after the 8 am news. The form and style of the service varies, depending on the denomination hosting the broadcast. This results in a varied and enriching experience of worship. St. Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow, participates regularly. The Palm Sunday, and Easter broadcasts promise to be interesting in the present circumstances. Why not try them?

You may like to listen to The St. John Passion by J.S.Bach on Radio 3 this Good Friday at 2pm.

Prayer Themes for Wc. 4th April

Passion Sunday:	Our Church Community, Diocese, and Province
Monday:	The NHS, our local surgeries, and all at DGRI
Tuesday:	For those affected by the Coronavirus
Wednesday:	Our local community, key workers & volunteers
Thursday:	The Government, and all in authority
Friday:	Refugees throughout the world
Saturday:	Guidance of the Holy Spirit, and ourselves.

Worship On-line with the Scottish Episcopal Church

This can be accessed via our website every Sunday at 11am

<https://dcdchurches.org.uk>

Gospel Readings for Holy Week

Palm Sunday	The Passion of Christ According to Matthew 26: 14 – 27: 66
Monday	John 12: 1-11
Tuesday	John 12: 20-36
Wednesday	John 13: 21-32
Maundy Thursday	John 13: 1-17, 31b-35
Good Friday	The Passion of Christ According to John 18: 1 – 19:42
Saturday	John 19: 38-42

Food Bank 'New Life' Castle Douglas

You will be aware of the acute shortage of tinned food etc in the shops which is causing great difficulties for our local food bank in keeping impoverished families fed. The New Life Food Bank would be grateful for continued donations of food or money and cheque donations into their office payable to 'New Life Community Church' for the attention of the foodbank at Blackpark Road, Castle Douglas, DG7 1DJ. This foodbank supports the needy in Castle Douglas & Dalbeattie.

Keith Dennison sent in this poem.

Please remember to pray for everyone in the NHS and their families.



These Are The Hands by Michael Rosen

These are the hands
That touch us first
Feel your head
Find the pulse
And make your bed.

These are the hands
That tap your back
Test the skin
Hold your arm
Wheel the bin
Change the bulb
Fix the drip
Pour the jug
Replace your hip

These are the hands
That fill the bath
Mop the floor
Flick the switch
Soothe the sore
Burn the swabs
Give us a jab
Throw out sharps
Design the lab.

And these are the hands
That stop the leaks
Empty the pan
Wipe the pipes
Carry the can
Clamp the veins
Make the cast
Log the dose
And touch us last.



The Daily Prayer Offices

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/spirituality/prayer/daily-offices/>

It is an important part of the tradition and spiritual life of the Scottish Episcopal Church that prayer is offered throughout the day. Set times of prayer, called the Office, are set aside for this purpose. Clergy are obliged, by reason of the vows they make, to pray at least the Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer and should also offer Compline (Night Prayer). Others are invited to join this round of devotion and praise, to strengthen their own spiritual life with God.

The Offices may be prayed either alone or in Church with others.

Each day, the Offices will be available on this page. Morning Prayer is made available from 6am, Evening Prayer after Midday for use later in the afternoon and Night Prayer from 6pm.

A Blessing for our times sent in by Helen Evans

This is the time to be slow,
Lie low to the wall
Until the bitter weather passes.

Try, as best you can, not to let
The wire brush of doubt
Scrape from your heart
All sense of yourself
And your hesitant light.

If you remain generous,
Time will come good;
And you will find your feet
Again on fresh pastures of promise,
Where the air will be kind
And blushed with beginning.

JOHN O'DONOHUE

Excerpt from his books, *To Bless the Space Between Us* (US) / *Benedictus* (Europe)