

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

SC010918 & SC011079

Newsletter No. 6

Easter 3

26th, April, 2020

PAX

Dear Friends in Christ,

Walking along 'Lover's Lane', early in the morning, whilst exercising 'the boys' in the still of the new born day, has been one of the deep joys of this period of lockdown. It has allowed me to hear my first Sedge Warbler¹ of the season, and glimpse a Reed Bunting - perched on a reed, above the almost dried up marsh. The sunlight in these early mornings is beguiling.



It's as if a whole new magical world lays at our feet, ready for us to enjoy. I realise that many of you will not be able to go out for various reasons, but just by sitting still in the garden, with a cup of tea or coffee, listening to the Blackbird or the Thrush is heavenly. (Their song in the evening is a delight too - the

equivalent of a monastic Compline!)

It is perhaps inevitable that one should think of Psalm 46, and the famous line "Be still, and know that I am God." Could God have given us this time to recognise His Presence? All around us He is there: in nature; the people that we long to hold and cannot; the things that we took for granted and now miss. And yet, in all this, there is a 'deeper communion'. I feel our relationship with God, and our world, is deepening. We now have time to appreciate. The false busyness of life has been removed from us, and we have been left with just ourselves. This may appear a living hell, but actually 'Silence' can be so beneficial. There is a wonderful story: *Abba Pambo was represented as refusing to speak to the visiting Archbishop of Alexandria. 'If he is not edified by my silence, he will not be edified by my speech,' says the old man.*² Sometimes our words and busyness help to strengthen the illusions with which we surround, protect, and comfort ourselves; without silence, we shan't get any closer to knowing who we are before God. Somewhere else we read: *A monk's cell is like the furnace*

¹ Sedge Warblers are long distance migrants from Africa (April to October)

² Theophilus the Archbishop 2

where the three young men found the Son of God. And it is like the pillar of cloud where God spoke to Moses.³ We are all willing or unwilling Religious at present. Living in enforced community or solitary confinement. It is difficult! The reward, however, can be richer beyond belief! As with so many things in life, it is what we make of the opportunities that are presented to us.

One of the great topics of the day (in church circles) is the lack of 'The Sacrament of Holy Communion'. Priests are, perhaps, over indulged, whilst congregations are starved! There appears to be no ready answers, and our inability to even have our churches open for Private Prayer, is sad beyond words. Within my reading I came across this passage:

*Thomas Merton in a letter to a Muslim wrote that the Eucharist is "the moment of the nearest presence of God in our lives" and as a priest wanted to share this moment as "He understood the love of God manifested in the Eucharist to be a love bestowed upon all, and understood that his role as a priest to be to make this love known."*⁴

There is of course no substitute for Communion, but God is present in Word, Spirit and **our** deeds. A random act of kindness: a gift, a phone-call, writing a letter or a card. All could transform a lonely persons day. In all these deeds, God is present.

Amidst the difficulties and miseries of our lives, I would ask you to remember the Syrian refugees, the migrants held in Turkey and Greece. Those African & Asian countries struggling with the Pandemic. God is present in all these places and if we can be His hands through aid or prayer, it is greatly needed. Mary Collins has brought these moving poems to my attention that I would like to share with you.

My Daily Bread

Will I grow old alone,
a pitied spinster, the dried-up nun?
Can we grow young,
Like the seaside,
when your first
Kiss taught me justice?

³ Anon 74

⁴ The Mystical Fire of Christ's Charity: Thomas Merton, the Eucharist, and the Meaning of Dialogue, Gregg Hillis Cistercian Studies Quarterly Vol 55.1 2020 p 81-2

Elopement
was never much
of an option.

A slow
steady courtship
has made me yours
a thousand times.

My wine-soaked heart
My lungs as
Daily bread

My sweet
My love
My Jesus

Real
presence

can I slip my fingers through yours
one last time, don't stop,
my Lover has me
all the time

blessed, broken
and shared

my heart
and your
Body⁵

It is no substitute for Holy Communion, but I have put together a short Agape service that you may wish to use at the time we would usually meet on Sunday. (You will find the attachment in the email or with this delivered Newsletter).

To return to the garden, and the Blackbird singing Compline. The Office usually finishes with the *Salve Regina*. I end with a portion of those words that seem so appropriate:

⁵ Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration <https://messyjesusbusiness.com/2011/06/26/poems-for-corpus-christi/>

*...To you do we cry, poor banished
children of Eve. To you do we
send up our sighs mourning and
weeping in this vale of tears.*

*Turn then, most gracious advocate towards us, and after
this exile show us the blessed fruit
of your womb, Jesus..*

May God continue to bless you and give you the gift to make the most of this time, to discover yourself, and the Risen One, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

With love in the Risen Christ

Christopher
Rector

No Church for ages

Why not....

.....Try meditating?

For all those who go to church most Sundays, the sudden and complete shutdown of the churches in response to the Coronavirus pandemic must have come as a shock – for some, an enormous shock. And the clergy, like everyone else, are working on imaginative ways that they can offer support within these constraints.

So what can we do at home on our own to feel we are still part of a worshipping community? Well, one possibility, perhaps surprising and initially unfamiliar, is to try Christian Meditation. Far from being a strange, ‘foreign’ custom, a simple form of meditation has been part of the Christian tradition right back to the early centuries, and even to Jesus himself. It just got rather lost in more recent times. For the last 50 years or so, the tradition has been revived, and there is now a World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM) – ecumenical, and with a strong presence in the UK.

WCCM recommends a short time of meditation – about 20 minutes – twice a day. The short version of ‘How to meditate’ is in the box below. But as long as you have Internet access, it’s best to go the website: either (for the UK) <https://www.christianmeditation.org.uk> or <http://www.wccm.org>. There is a great deal of help, resources and information on these websites.

As they all say, meditating is ‘simple, but not easy’. But, with practice and perseverance it will bring rewards, and perhaps a new dimension to your spiritual life. It’s for everyone – young (including children!), old, new Christians and (really!) old hands, and those whose links to ‘church’ are at best tenuous. And, for all of us stuck at home, you become part of a very real, though invisible, worldwide Christian community.

Sit down. Sit still with your back straight. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert.

Then interiorly, silently begin to recite a single word – a prayer word or mantra.

We recommend the ancient Christian prayer-word "Maranatha". Say it as four equal syllables.

Breathe normally and give your full attention to the word as you say it, silently,
gently, faithfully and - above all - simply.

The essence of meditation is simplicity. Stay with the same word during the whole meditation and in each meditation day to day. Don't visualise but listen to the word, as you say it. Let go of all thoughts (even good thoughts), images and other words. Don't fight your distractions: let them go by saying your word faithfully, gently and attentively and returning to it as soon as you realise you have stopped saying or it or when your attention wanders.

Meditate twice a day, morning and evening, for between 20 and 30 minutes. It may take a time to develop this discipline and the support of a tradition and community is always helpful.

Dalbeattie Food Bank Site Now Open

Today we opened a second Heart of Galloway food bank at 24 High Street, Dalbeattie. If you need food stop in Monday-Friday 12noon-2pm. If you cannot attend then call 07730788335 or email projects@castledouglas.info and we will deliver to your door.

A poem I received from Edith Thorpe:

And where is Jesus, this strange Easter Day?
Not lost in our locked churches, anymore
Than he was sealed in that dark sepulchre.
The locks are loosed; the stone is rolled away,
And is up and risen, long before,
Alive, at large, and making his strong way
Into the world he gave his life to save,
No need to seek him in his empty grave.
He might have been a wafer in the hands
Of priests this day, or music from the lips
Of red-robed choristers, instead he slips
Away from church, shakes off our linen bands
To don his apron with a nurse: he grips
And lifts a stretcher, soothes with gentle hands
The frail flesh of the dying, gives them hope,
Breathes with the breathless, lends them strength
On Thursday we applauded, for he came
And served us in a thousand names and faces
Mopping our sickroom floors and catching traces
Of that virus which was death to him:
Good Friday happened in a thousand places
Where Jesus held the helpless, died with them
That they might share his Easter in their need,
Now they are risen with him, risen indeed.

Malcom Guite: Easter Day

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.

Prayer Chain

Prayer is perhaps the only help we can give to people in need throughout the world. Please consider joining our growing 'Prayer Chain'.

Contact Sandra Walsh tel.01557 331596 email sandrawalshkbt@yahoo.com.

Prayer Themes for Wc. 26th, April

Easter Sunday 3:	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. Bothwell House, Hanover House, Carlingwark Care Home, Barlochan House Care Home, Munchies Park House, and Alma McFadyen Care Centre
Thursday:	The Government, and all in authority
Friday:	Refugees throughout the world
Saturday:	Guidance of the Holy Spirit, and ourselves.

Gospel Readings for the 3rd week of Easter

Easter Sunday 3		Lk 24: 13-35
Monday		Jn 6: 22-29
Tuesday		Jn 6: 30-35
Wednesday	St. Catherine of Siena	Matt 11: 25-30
Thursday		Jn 6: 44-51
Friday		Jn 6: 52-59
Saturday	St. Athanasius	Matt 10: 22-25

New Help Line for those at high risk from COVID-19

Tel: 0800 111 4000

Offers practical and emotional support for those who do not have a support network. This includes disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, or those receiving a flu jab. Available 0900hrs to 1700hrs

Here is the link for the latest D & G Community Support Magazine

https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/UKDGC/2020/04/24/file_attachments/1435055/community%20newsletter%20Friday%2024%20April%20web.pdf