



AD CLERUM UPDATE 8

28th March 2020

Dear Colleagues

Tomorrow is Passion Sunday. We turn our face with Our Lord to Jerusalem and prepare to walk the way of the cross. Except that our observance of Passiontide this year is overshadowed by the coronavirus epidemic. The headlines are dominated by the news that first Prince Charles and now the Prime Minister has the virus. There is a surge in infection rates in London and the South-East. Emergency admissions are on the rise and temporary hospitals are being constructed.

For many who live in the South-West, no matter the headlines and no matter what the Government says, it all feels rather unreal, like a 'phoney war'. The sun is shining, Spring is all around us, and the vast majority of us are not witnessing the devastation that this virus can and will cause. But we need only to look at Italy and Spain, or now London, Kent and Hertfordshire to hear the heartfelt pleas from NHS staff and relatives to do all we can to stop this virus escalating out of control, and to stay home. We have this one window of opportunity to slow down the transmission of this virus.

It is this context, I attach a Pastoral Letter from the Archbishops and Diocesan Bishops. It endeavours to distil the best Public Health advice available to us and I commend it to you. Next week I will be writing to you about the pastoral care of the sick and dying, and about funerals in anticipation of a sharp rise in the number of deaths in the South-West. Thank you for all you are doing in so many different ways. You know your people and they will take their cues from you. It is what you are doing locally in terms of leading worship to the best of your ability, helping people to pray in their anxiety, and reaching out to the fearful and sick, that all speaks so powerfully of the love of Christ crucified.

Nails were not enough to hold God-and-Man nailed and fastened to the cross,
had not love held him there.

Catherine of Siena

Lord Jesus Christ,
may your body, outstretched upon the wood of the cross,
give wings to my soul, which is often weighed down,
and make it rise up to you.

Isaac of Nineveh

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect for Passion Sunday (Lent 5)

Please be assured of my prayers and those of my colleagues on the senior staff for you this Passiontide as together we endeavour to serve our communities and be faithful to Christ. In words from the Letter to the Hebrews, 'Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God' (Hebrews 12.2).

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