



SUNDAY 29th March 2020
Fifth Sunday of Lent

A message from Father Colin

During this period of time instead of the bulletin detailing the weekly activities of the Church I want to use the opportunity to keep you updated on how the current coronavirus crisis will affect us as a church family and how we might respond to the present situation.

The Present Situation

Since last week, when all public services had been cancelled but the church could remain open for private prayer, there has been another step change in the way in which we are called to respond to the pandemic. All places of worship must be closed and locked not only for public worship but also for private prayer. This virus is highly contagious, and we must do our part to show the wider community how we must behave in the current situation. There can be no weddings or baptisms in church buildings until further notice. Funerals can only happen at the Crematorium or at the graveside, with only immediate family members in attendance. Clergy and the bereaved will be asked to keep their distance from one another and to avoid physical contact. Livestreaming of services can continue but cannot be recorded from the church but from the home.

Our Response

In his recent pastoral letter to the clergy Bishop Christopher stresses that our priority should lie in our pastoral ministry as a community of faith and, since we are not able to physically enter into the homes of others at this time, we must undertake it from our homes, phones and computers. We have already begun this and I am grateful to the pastoral team, and in particular Lesley Handy and Anne Morgan, for identifying those who may feel lonely and isolated and also to those who have volunteered to make regular contact with these people, offering comfort and prayer.

As well as responding *pastorally* we need also to respond *prayerfully*. To assist us with this there are various resources that the Church of England and the Diocese of Portsmouth have put on their websites (www.churchofengland.org and www.portsmouth.anglican.org). This Sunday would have been the occasion when the Bishop of Portsmouth was to join us for our 50th anniversary Eucharist. This is of course not possible. However, he will be streaming Sunday Eucharist for the diocese live from Bishopsgrrove, and I encourage you to follow this. Further details will be available on the diocesan website in due course. In addition, I will endeavour to provide some liturgical resources during each day of Holy Week. These will be available online and in a print version for those who are unable to access a computer.

These changing times necessitate new and innovative ways of 'being church' but it won't be forever. Let us pray for a swift resolution.

I finish, I am afraid, on a rather sad note. Many of you will have come to know Ray and Pauline Kent who have been coming to us for some months. Sadly, Pauline has recently died. I managed to visit her before the lockdown was announced, and I am in contact with Ray. Please hold them both in your prayers, along with their daughter who lives in Italy and so is unable to return home due to travel restrictions.

With my continued prayers for you all. Fr Colin

Remembering Those Who Need Our Prayers This Week

Shelley Lazlett, Geoff, Anna Chapman, Christopher, Richard Rundle, Martyn Lawlor, Hillary, Madison, Amy, Carmell, Christine, Ray Kent, Sandra Hewett, Spencer, Margaret Cavey, Ken Pask, John Haughton, Pete Martin, Anne Brown; Pete; Fr Beau Brandie; Jenny Pilling; Fr Charles

 We Remember John Symonds, Richard Field, Vic Brown, Rosemary Jameson, Barbara Green, Pauline Kent and Lesley Harman who have died recently and Violet Brown, Daisy Mitchell and Betty Herbert whose anniversaries fall at this time.

COLLECT

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 your Son our Lord,
 who is alive and reigns with you,
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and for ever.

FIRST READING Ezekiel 37:1-14

A reading from the book of the prophet Ezekiel.
 The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD." So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD."

PSALM Psalm 130

R *My soul waits for the Lord.*

Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord;
 Lord, hear my voice;
 let your ears consider well the voice of my
 supplication.
 If you, Lord, were to mark what is done amiss,
 O Lord, who could stand?
 But there is forgiveness with you,
 so that you shall be feared. **R**



I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for him;
 in his word is my hope.
 My soul waits for the Lord,
 more than the night watch for the morning,
 more than the night watch for the morning. **R**

O Israel, wait for the Lord,
 for with the Lord there is mercy;
 With him is plenteous redemption
 and he shall redeem Israel from all their sins. **R**

SECOND READING Romans 8:6-11

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.
 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law – indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

GOSPEL John 11:1-45

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

A certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had

come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

POST COMMUNION

Lord Jesus Christ,
 you have taught us
 that what we do for the least of our brothers and
 sisters
 we do also for you:
 give us the will to be the servant of others
 as you were the servant of all,
 and gave up your life and died for us,
 but are alive and reign, now and for ever.