Province of Canterbury Mothers’ Union

Merciful God, we entrust to your unfailing and tender care in these times, those who are ill or in pain, knowing that whenever danger threatens, your everlasting arms are there to hold us all safe.

Comfort and heal us and restore us all to health and strength, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you." 1 Peter 5: 6,7

GOOD FRIDAY and EASTER 2020

Well I think this is the strangest Good Friday I have ever spent in my?? (you’ll have to ask me when we meet) years! Not sure about you, but this lock down is testing and challenging. And many still must go to work to keep us safe and the country functioning. Wasn't it so heartening these past Thursdays at 8pm to hear in our streets and neighborhoods the sounds of clapping and cheering for our appreciation of all who working so hard in our health and social care services and for all those who keep us safe and the country functioning? Our Cathedral's octagon here in Ely, is currently lit up by blue light, to show our solidarity with all those working so hard in our NHS and in so many other ways.

And the first Good Friday was also strange. Nobody sure how things will work out, or even what is going to happen next. A last meal with the disciples the night before and then that evening in the Garden of Gethsemane praying. Then the onrush of a crowd of police from the authorities with Judas betraying Jesus, some violence with Peter using a sword, healing by Jesus and then that night and the next morning of trials, some six in total I think, all illegal. Then Good Friday, with the clash between Herod, Jesus and Pontius Pilate, two of these three thinking that they had ultimate power and Jesus who knows where true power comes from, confronting these two. And it seems to end in more violence and then crucifixion, the cruelest death penalty in the occupying Roman's Armory. And then, Jesus dies.

So that was that then. Those three years of itinerant teaching, healing, and meals, and the realisation among those closest to Jesus that, yes, here is the Messiah, who is really going to save us. All confounded. Betrayal, denial, running away, fleeing even, by those who thought and lived as Jesus' close friends. All come to this. A tragic end.
Now we know that that was not the end, but those first disciples were also imprisoned in their own thinking and had to wait through the silence and desolation of Holy Saturday, until awakened and liberated by the resurrection. One of the churches in my parish was dedicated to St Mary Magdalene and St Peter, both the first witnesses to the resurrection. That event too was marked by running and crying, and liberation too. Let's let this Easter also be a moment like that for us, though any running will have to be part of your exercise for the day.

Though retired and as the Diocesan Chaplain to the MU here in Ely diocese, the opportunity came to extend that role to the Canterbury Province. My wife and I both trained as teachers in Canterbury, and my father was ordained there by Archbishop Michael Ramsey in 1972. Though we have moved around the world and have lived in Ely, Cyprus, Hong Kong and Germany, when I was working in Service Schools for the Ministry of Defense, it is so good to be back in the UK. I will hope to be able, in my time as your Chaplain, to meet as many as possible and hear about all the great work which is making such a huge difference to so many people both in our parishes and in local communities. Thank you.

Please be assured of our prayers here in Ely for all the MU in the Province and around the world and keep encouraging so many others with our fantastic work and ministries.

_The Revd. Michael G Banyard: Provincial MU Chaplain_

Keep us good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support those who are anxious or fearful and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

_God bless. Christ is Risen: He is risen indeed. Alleluia._