

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Firstly, I have been profoundly moved by the ways in which you are encouraging and supporting one another; and also by the depth of prayer that is being sustained across our households. This is a great encouragement to me; and reflects something of love, community and maturity in faith.

This email reflects on three things: Holy Saturday, Emmaus Road and Easter Day (including the order of service and zoom links for tomorrow).

Holy Saturday

Today is Holy Saturday: the day when our Lord lay in the tomb; when everything is silent; where all we can do is watch and wait. It's a day which allows us to take our grief, sorrow, confusion and frustration seriously.

This year, that space and time is especially poignant. Like the disciples, we are scattered in our own homes; isolated behind closed doors. Our churches lie silent, with their doors sealed, like a tomb.

Rachel has prepared some reflections which you may find helpful today - from grief to doubt, confusion and anger: it might be that there is one aspect of today you wish to ponder and pray through. You can find them here: <http://www.hendonparish.org.uk/about-us/news/from-the-vicar/navigating-holy-saturday.php>

However, part of the mystery of today is that God's grace is still at work, unseen. Love goes to the very depths of despair and grief; and that painful, slow process of resurrection begins to be worked out. For Jesus is Lord of the living and the dead.

Emmaus Road?

For us, it is hard to feel that it is Easter. So many of the things we cherish are not available to us: gathering to sing, sharing an embrace, being with family and friends. Of course, that is most sharply reflected in the absence of breaking bread together at the Eucharist.

Over our life times, we have been nourished by the presence of Christ in the sacrament: receiving what we are and becoming what we receive, Christ's body. It is our still point and plumb line; the lens through which we see the world; the point at which we remember the night of betrayal, from the perspective of resurrection; the place where our vision of God's Kingdom of justice and peace is renewed.

My late supervisor, Dan Hardy, once described the Eucharist as a gathered interval in the scattered life of the church. Over recent weeks, I've been wondering: what if we are called to inhabit that interval for a little longer than the usual week? What if that interval heightens our anticipation of that eucharistic feast?

Meanwhile, perhaps this Eastertide we are walking the road to Emmaus: the world around us is fearful and unsettled; there are questions which we can't answer; we are haunted by suffering and death, just as those disciples were (Luke 24). Yet, we also hear stories which of life-affirming and demanding care; of risk and love; perhaps even rumours of resurrection and good news.

Just as Jesus opened up the scriptures to those bewildered disciples, might we also listen deeply to God's word. As we read in the Spirit - alone and together, might we discover in new ways the people we are called to be; might we learn something new about Gods ways with the world. Our homes are, at present, focal points for our prayer and devotion, but might our hearts burn within us as we keep going; as we know that one day we will know the nearness of the risen Lord in the breaking of bread.

Easter Day

Given this sense of being on a journey together in bewildering times, our worship tomorrow will focus on the light of Christ and renewing our baptism vows.

I hope this will give us a sense of hope and joy as we gather together in adversity; knowing that we are still one body, with many members.

On Easter Day, there will be a service on Zoom at 10.00 (click on the link or enter the ID and password into your app). There is coffee at 11.30. Please contact me for the links.

Please have a candle to hand - and a means of lighting it. A short order of service is attached.

We cry to God in the depths of isolation; we long for light to shine in darkness. May we be filled with faith and hope, as a new day dawns; as new life is opened up for us.

Grace and peace to you,
Julie