

WEDNESDAY SUPPLEMENT

29th April 2020

Christ is Risen!
He is Risen Indeed!

Welcome to this week's Wednesday Supplement. Please read about contributing to our VE Day service: see pages 3 and 4. For this week's prayer suggestion, see pages 4 - 5.

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READERS FOR SUNDAY

Many of you have written in with kind comments about Steve and Stuart's readings on Sunday, and in favour of my use of images to accompany them. This is by way of reminder that I would welcome readers and intercessors to contribute to the recording every Sunday.

You don't need to video yourself reading if you don't want to – just make an audio recording which I can set to background images. If you have a microphone on your PC or laptop (as most now do), Windows 10 has a built-in app called Voice Recorder. Quicktime on the Mac does the same job, as does Voice Memo on iPads and iPhones. Most smartphones have a voice recording app that enables the phone to function as a dictaphone. On my Samsung device, it is called Voice Recorder and came pre-installed.

WHEN WE ARE SILENT

At 11am yesterday, the nation held a minute's silence for NHS, care and other key workers who have lost their lives during the coronavirus pandemic.

There can be no doubt that all those to whom the silence paid tribute were deserving of our highest respect and, it must be said, greater collective effort to protect and support them (after the crisis is over, too).

I read online and heard in a couple of conversations, the inevitable "but...". This was mostly not a churlish, ungrateful "but" – more along the lines of a "both this and ...". Let me explain.

The list of people to whom we owe our gratitude at present is considerable, including all who continue to do their jobs in the face of increased risk. The risk faced

by NHS and care workers is probably greatest, but many others continue to work in close proximity to both colleagues and clients. The definition of "key worker" is very wide. Even by the Government's reckoning, it encompasses over 10m people. It includes, for example, postal and delivery workers, refuse collectors, school staff keeping hub schools open on rota, and those who ensure that we have electricity, water and other services.

I take the opportunity to pray for all these essential workers whenever I pick up my post or hear my bins being emptied. Knowing that I can support businesses around the country that are important to me by continuing to order from them, and knowing that my rubbish will be collected, is a real blessing. If you can

The category of key worker also includes supermarket staff: there are nearly half a million people working for Tesco alone, which is the largest employer in the UK apart from the NHS. The number of people who face abnormal risk is even larger if we include the families of key workers, and others who live in their households, who are exposed to the same risks, at second hand.

There is a wider point. We often say something to the effect of, 'you have recognised the contribution X has made, but what about the contribution Y has made?' I remember it being said when a local lollipop man received an MBE. Why not other crossing supervisors, everyone asked? It is said about the applause for the NHS: 'what about others who deserve recognition?'

Sometimes this looks like sour grapes, but there is a much more legitimate point than that. It is about keeping that sense of perspective, that breadth of vision, of which I have spoken in previous *Supplements*. When we face a crisis, large or small, personal or international, our focus can all too easily become narrower and narrower. It can also become very self-regarding. It's partly for having avoided that particular trap, for putting others before themselves, that we are applauding the NHS.

We can both commend and participate in the silence, or in the applause for the NHS, without losing sight of the failings which have made sacrifice necessary, or worse. Most importantly, which is not about blame, we

can recognise the achievement, or the sacrifice, of one group, without allowing ourselves to forget about others. We can concentrate all our resources upon resolving the crisis before us, while at the same time learning the lessons it teaches, and preserving some of the good inventions to which necessity has driven us.

Put coronavirus aside for just a moment.

UNICEF estimates that 22,000 children die *each day* around the world from poverty. Nearly 6000 of these daily deaths are due to diseases which are easily treated by medicine which we take for granted.

The WHO estimates that 2,300 people around the world die every day from diarrhoea and other diseases caused by poor water and sanitation.

These deaths are seldom remembered or marked in any way. The exact numbers may be new to us, but the general point is not. These are not forgotten deaths. We know that the world is full of unnecessary suffering that could be avoided.

These terrible statistics, in the context of the mercifully smaller number of deaths of key workers in Britain, does not in any way diminish the honour due to those who have died in the cause of serving others. It is always right that we pay tribute to those who have died while working on our behalf. "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,*" says Jesus in John 15:13 (KJV). There is something deeply moving about self-sacrifice, whether willing or not, in a greater cause. It is something which we will have cause to remember soon, on VE day.

As Christians, we are called not to judge or to distinguish people one from another, for their good qualities any more than their bad qualities. One unnecessary death, one avoidable instance of suffering, ought to occasion as much concern (and resolve) on our part as another. Emotionally, we have evolved to worry more about what is close to us and affects us personally – and of course there is a logic in that. When we are in good mental health, we are also able to resist being overcome by the magnitude of human suffering. If it were not so, we could not function.

In the life of our mind, however, we can comprehend the level of suffering in the world without being overwhelmed by it, without losing the capacity to act. Every person is made in the image of God. Every person is equal before God. "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*" (Galatians 3:28). Asked, "*who is my neighbour?*", Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan, to illustrate the breadth and depth

of the neighbour principle. Death and suffering that occurs far away, or in circumstances of pathos or squalor, without heroism, or preventably, deserves our compassion, empathy, outrage and attention as much as, not more than, suffering that is closer to home.

Wherever we see suffering, illness, need, poverty, hunger or thirst, it is that right that we mark it. However, it is not enough to notice, to be sad, or to be regretful. We must remember Jesus' teaching, set out here in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 25:

³¹ 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³ and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." ⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

A BROAD PERSPECTIVE

Bishop James circulated a useful and interesting reflection to ministers yesterday, summarising some of the lessons, opportunities and challenges he discerned

as a result of the present crisis. It was very helpful to be guided to just the sort of broad perspective that I have noted above. Here are a few points inspired by what Bishop James wrote (but views are all my own!).

What are the lessons of coronavirus? They include:

- Our own *frailty* and *vulnerability*, despite all the inventions and advances of modern society.
- Our *interdependence*. The esteem in which we hold key workers and the NHS is in part a reflection of how much our daily lives depend on utilities, services and products provided by other people.
- The *importance of human contact*. I see this every few days as I conduct funerals in which the mourners cannot comfort one another.
- Our *impact on the environment*. Even here in our rural environment something of this can be seen. When we look at statistics of air quality, and pictures of wild animals on city streets, we realise just how much we suppress nature.

I am sure that you can think of many others, perhaps in terms of the rhythm and rituals of life; the importance of locality; education and the life of the mind; and pace of life. What has the lockdown taught us?

What are the opportunities presented by this crisis?

- In church, we have been forced to explore new ways of being the body of Christ. Taken together, my emails, printed sheets, audio and video recordings reach several times the number of people who attend a service on any given week. How much of this should we continue when we are able to meet together again?
- In the community, there has been a great flowering of voluntary work on behalf of others, which has also illuminated how much we *already* did for each other. To our everyday neighbourliness there has been added layer of fairly informal organisation, as well as new services such as Meals on Wheels. It reminds me of some of what was good about the Blair/Brown governments' SureStart scheme and the vestigial Big Society ideas of the 2010 coalition. As a society, we don't always do a good job of balancing the issues of taxation and public services; central and local government; official, charitable and informal delivery of services. The crisis reminds us that thinking about these things, without political rancour – and trying to do better – is one of the most important duties we have to each other.

Finally, what are the challenges presented by the crisis?

- For the church, and the church in Cumbria especially, we must be realistic. The financial impact will be considerable. Even if individual parishes are able to ride out the storm using their reserves and their good levels of standing order giving (as we broadly are) this will not be true everywhere. The downward trend of income over the last few years will be exacerbated and this will impact particularly at Diocesan and National level, where clergy and other resources are paid for. Here I should quote a line from Bishop James, albeit not in the original context: “*At present, even the best-case [financial] scenario is eye-wateringly painful.*” Those of us who are in a good financial position will have a responsibility for helping those who are less well-off. Our generosity towards the foodbank shows how well we understand this.
- Technology has for many of us been the saving of our corporate life over the last few weeks. However, about 20% of churchgoers in the Diocese have no access to the internet. Technology can be either ‘a taste of heaven’ or ‘a glimpse of hell’ depending on your viewpoint. In the last seven days, three people have said to me ‘I really don't like using the telephone’. How did I respond? Well, I'm the fourth! I'd much rather see you in person, or write you a letter or email!

Do let me know what lessons, opportunities and challenges you discern – especially if they are additional, different or contradictory of any of the above.

VE DAY

You may recall that the May Bank Holiday has been moved to Friday 8th May 2020, in order that we might mark the 75th Anniversary of VE Day over a long weekend from 8th to 10th. Sadly, the coronavirus emergency means that most events must be cancelled or postponed (see <https://www.veday75.org/> for the official position).

There are several ways in which we can mark the occasion. Solo pipers and town criers and the like are encouraged. The ‘Nation's Toast’ at 3pm on 8th May can also go ahead in our homes: “*To those who gave so much, we thank you.*” You can also make and display bunting: the colour printer and laminator are already at work in our house.

Special service

VE Day has always been important in my mind. I grew up hearing from my Grandparents' generation about the Second World War, from the perspectives of active

service and also from the home front in London and from evacuation in the West Country.

I would like to produce a special service to mark VE Day, which I will make available in audio and video form through our websites and YouTube channel, as well as in an extended emailed/printed form like the *Supplement*.

Your contribution, please!

I invite you to contribute to the service, by sending me a photograph of a relative or friend (they do not need to have been a local resident), telling us what they were doing on VE Day, whether serving in the armed forces, in a reserved occupation, or perhaps evacuated. If possible, you might like to create a video 'selfie', a few seconds long, showing yourself sitting with the photograph of the person you are remembering, giving their name and role.

I will then create a montage of these contributions as part of the service, which will be a fitting way to remember those whom we love but see no longer, and their contribution. It will be the equivalent of standing during a church service to name individuals in an act of remembrance.

In the next day or two I will create an example video to illustrate the point. In the meantime, if you would like to contribute, please get in touch and I will gladly assist. If you can't provide a digitised copy of a photograph, I can always take a socially-distanced photograph or video of you outside, holding it.

JOSH'S BLOG

This week, Josh Seligman (Broughton) introduced me to his blog, *In the Sixth Month*, which can be found here:

<https://inthesixthmonth.blogspot.com/>

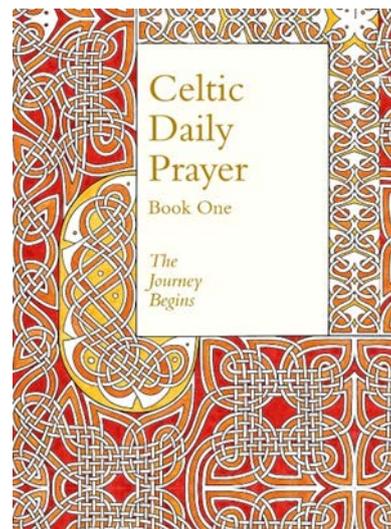
I thoroughly recommend it to you. It is full of gentle, thoughtful reflection and is both beautifully written beautifully illustrated. Josh has kindly agreed to contribute reflections to future editions of the *Wednesday Supplement*. It will be really excellent to have another voice on these pages.

PLEASE PRAY FOR

The family and friends of the late Christine Nuttall, Graham George, Norman Rawlinson and Molly Steel. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

CELTIC MORNING PRAYER

A few weeks ago (See the *Wednesday Supplement*, for 8th April) we looked at the Northumbria Community and used their Evening Prayer liturgy. Today we sample Celtic Morning Prayer. Remember that two volumes of *Celtic Daily Prayer* are available for purchase if you find



this approach to prayer helpful. Each volume is attractively bound and offers immense variety, meaning that your prayer will always be fresh and inspired by new scripture and meditations.

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Opening sentences

One thing I have asked of the Lord,
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life;
to behold the beauty of the Lord
and to seek Him in His temple.

Call: Who is it that you seek?
Response: **We seek the Lord our God.**
Call: Do you seek Him with all your heart?
Response: **Amen. Lord, have mercy.**
Call: Do you seek Him with all your soul?
Response: **Amen. Lord, have mercy.**
Call: Do you seek Him with all your mind?
Response: **Amen. Lord, have mercy.**
Call: Do you seek Him with all your strength?
Response: **Amen. Christ, have mercy.**

Declaration of faith

To whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life,
and we have believed and have come to know
that You are the Holy One of God.

Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory.

Today's Scripture Readings

Psalm 105:1-7

O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually. Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgements he has uttered, O offspring of his servant Abraham, children of Jacob, his chosen ones. He is the Lord our God; his judgements are in all the earth.

Ezekiel 1:28-2:5

Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendour all round. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking. He said to me: O mortal, stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you. And when he spoke to me, a spirit entered into me and set me on my feet; and I heard him speaking to me. He said to me, Mortal, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day. The descendants are impudent and stubborn. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.' Whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house), they shall know that there has been a prophet among them.

Philippians 1:6

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

Today's Meditation

Let everything that has life,
let everything that has breath
give all the glory and honour
and praise to the One who
overcame death.
Let every living thing
sing of the mercies of our God.
Let us exalt Him wherever we live
with thanksgiving and joy
in our hearts.

If we don't praise Him,
the mountains will.
If we don't exalt Him,
the rocks will cry out
in our stead,
'God is not dead!'

Let every living thing
sing of the mercies of our God.
Let us exalt Him wherever we live
with thanksgiving and joy
in our hearts.

(Lawrence Chewning)

Prayers for others

*Please offer prayer for those in need throughout the world
and for the whole church of God in its many traditions and
denominations.*

Canticle

Christ, as a light
illumine and guide me.
Christ, as a shield
overshadow me.
Christ under me;
Christ over me;
Christ beside me
on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me,
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.
Be in the heart of each to whom I speak;
in the mouth of each who speaks unto me.
This day be within and without me,
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.
Christ as a light;
Christ as a shield;
Christ beside me
on my left and my right.

Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,
wherever He may send you.
May He guide you through the wilderness,
protect you through the storm.
May He bring you home rejoicing
at the wonders He has shown you.
May He bring you home rejoicing
once again into our doors.

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Taken from Morning Prayer from the Northumbria Community's
Celtic Daily Prayer, published by Collins.