

Daily Reflections for wb 23rd March

Monday

Welcome to our first daily reflection. This week our reflections will be offered by the Rev'd Dominic Holroyd-Thomas, Curate in the Welwyn Team.

We find ourselves in strange times. Yesterday was Mothering Sunday, often a time of families coming together and giving thanks for the love which they share. However, for many, yesterday would have been very different – older relatives might be self-isolating, and all pubs and restaurants are closed. I heard of one family video calling at their respective dining room tables. They were going to eat the same meal at the same time, and be present with one another, albeit virtually.

In our Gospel reading today (John 4: 43-end) we read of a royal official travelling 20 miles from Capernaum to Cana to see Jesus because his son is dying. We can only assume that the official made this journey on foot. When he arrives, he asks Jesus to come down to Capernaum with him so that he might heal his son. Instead, Jesus tells the man to 'Go; your son will live.' In faith, the royal official – a Gentile – returns home. On his way home one of his slaves approaches him and tells him that his son is recovering. It transpires that he began to show signs of recovery the hour Jesus said to him that his son will live.

It is interesting that Jesus did not meet the boy. He did not lay hands on him or pray over him. He never set his eyes on him. The boy's healing happened from a distance. We are reminded that the power of God and his ability to heal and unite is not hindered by any geographical separation. God's love is instead a bridge between us all, regardless of whether we can see, or be with, those we love in this present time of social distancing, isolation and uncertainty.

Tuesday

Healing is a somewhat peculiar term. So often nowadays we take it to mean a physical healing – whether someone is cured of a physical ailment.

In our Gospel reading today (John 5: 1-16), Jesus heals a man at the portico who had been ill for 38 years. This is the third miracle in John's Gospel – or 'sign' as John calls them.

Jesus heals the man, telling him to 'stand up, take your mat and walk.' But the healing takes place on the sabbath. A day set aside for prayer, and not for healing. This upsets a great crowd who begin to persecute him.

I am touched by the many acts of kindness and charity being shown in communities throughout the world. Indeed, in a statement on Friday 20th March, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said 'when this is over – and it will be over – we want to look back on this moment and remember the many small acts of kindness done to us and by us.' But, like you, I am also saddened by images of selfish buying and those viral photographs of the elderly not being able to purchase everyday essentials.

We experience God through these daily acts of kindness, through these daily signs of community, faith and love. And these signs of healing are all around us today. Of communities rallying together healing the division of age and generation, of foodbanks healing the wounds of greed and selfishness

or perhaps it is the medical healing being outworked in our hospitals to those who are sick. We are reminded today that healing is not solely physical, but a continuous spiritual, emotional, social and economic event too.

Jesus Christ is the greatest physician, and our ultimate healer, who reached out in his ministry to open the world's eyes to the Kingdom of God. Through his birth our lives are also made new, and we are each called to be advocates of that new life, and that new hope. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who in turn points us to heaven, so that we might be living 'signs' of that ultimate and eternal healing which Jesus promises to us all.

Wednesday

Livestream weekday mass.

Thursday

Our Gospel reading today (John 5: 31-end) is typical of John. It is mysterious and poetic.

John is a good interpreter of the words of Jesus, but in his gospel, John does not necessarily give literal translations of Jesus' words. Instead, they are translated to the language and context of his intended audience: of the Christian communities of Asia Minor. It is for this reason that John's words are not always easy to understand. In them are mixed the words of God and the words of the Evangelist himself.

Mystery is at the heart of the Christian faith. I think of the acclamation often said just after words of institution during the Eucharistic Prayer: 'Great is the mystery of faith. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.' These words – the *Mysterium Fidei* – convey the deep truths and mysteries of the Christian faith.

Mystery is a difficult thing to live with. We live in a world which seeks to have the answers for everything. But there are some things we just do not know. Some things we will never know. Yet it is that mystery of God coming among us in the person of Jesus which brings hope and meaning to our lives. We do not know how – we are just asked to trust. I pray that we might trust in the goodness of the Lord with the knowledge that, ultimately, somehow, all shall be well.

Friday

Living with difference is one of the most difficult things to do. It is why, throughout history, we have had many wars and conflicts – we are blind to see where the other is coming from. In our Gospel today (John 7: 1-2, 10, 25-30), Jesus goes to Jerusalem to attend one of the great feasts. Whilst there, he receives a mixed reception. Many refused to believe him because they did not see him as important enough – they were blind to the presence of God.

Being rejected can be a difficult thing. Whether it is being rejected for job, being rejected by your friends or being rejected by society on grounds of your gender or skin colour, rejection is painful and tough. We have all experienced rejection in some form.

How must Jesus have felt within himself at the people's refusal to hear and listen to his good news? This helps us to understand the human aspect of Jesus' life. We must allow ourselves to be drawn closer to him as we realise how much like us Jesus really is.

How do you manage when people reject you and criticise you? It can be a great help to turn to the Lord as someone who understands you from his own human experience, and who supports you by his continuous friendship, so that we may respond to difference with understanding and compassion.

Saturday

Jesus is a controversial figure. He is perhaps just as controversial now as he was when he lived. The Gospel today (John 7: 40-52) reminds us of this. Some people saw him as a Prophet, others the Messiah. Some did not see the Jesus as important at all.

These differences of opinion and interpretation can result in division. The story of Jesus tells us that. It was because of human division that a man – regardless of whether you recognise him as the Messiah or not – died. That surely must shock us all.

Jesus' life and death are a helpful lesson to us all of what can happen if we fail to see and respect our God-given differences. Like a tribe, we surround ourselves with like-minded people, often failing to look out for those who do not conform to our ideals.

In his life and ministry Jesus teaches us what it means to love our neighbour – regardless of our human differences. In these times of international uncertainty, it is important that we put aside our human differences, those things which divide 'us' and 'them', so that, together, we might truly love our neighbour. Without exception. Regardless of opinion or belief.