



ARCHBISHOP OF WALES and BISHOP OF SWANSEA AND BRECON.
THE MOST REVEREND JOHN D E DAVIES
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PASTORAL LETTER FROM ARCHBISHOP JOHN

Among the words which we have recently heard and, perhaps, used much more frequently is the word 'unprecedented'. For example:

- The times are unprecedented.
- Government measures are unprecedented.
- Anxiety is at unprecedented levels.
- The NHS is under unprecedented strain.
- Disruption our communities, our churches and our individual lives is unprecedented.

What, I know, to be also unprecedented is the determination being demonstrated by communities of faith, communities at large, families and individuals to engage in acts of goodness, kindness and generosity which, even when at a distance, offer much-needed support to those who are vulnerable, needy and fearful. The number of people who have responded to the call for volunteers is a remarkable indication of the determination to which I have already referred, while health-care professionals face the challenge head-on.

Loving God's ways, and demonstrating this by loving one's neighbour is a fundamental foundation of our faith and its practice, so I thank you for all that you are doing to help in whatever ways you are able.

Although church buildings are now closed and likely to remain so for some time, opportunities for private reflection, prayer and contemplation are open to us all. Please use these to focus upon the precious nature of life and just how fragile it can be in the face of illness. Focus, too, upon these beautiful words from the prophecy of Isaiah to some of which I made reference at Christmas:

*But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
You are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you.
Do not fear, for I am with you;*

At times of personal anxiety and in the present unprecedented circumstances, such words of comfort are vitally important for us to reflect upon and absorb. They provide us with assurance that we matter and that other people matter; and they both can and should encourage us to face challenges with personal courage and a commitment to the good of others.

Any act, however small, of kindness, generosity, compassionate service and love shown to another person in need demonstrates that we have heeded the words of Jesus from the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan, to 'go and do likewise'.



I pray that you will feel encouraged and valued, that you will remember that you matter. I pray that you will recognise that others matter too, and that following the example of Jesus and his faithful disciples down the ages, you will be a support, a helper and a comforter.

I want, now, to turn to the days ahead in our church calendar:

We are approaching the journey through that most holy season of the Christian year, Passiontide and Holy Week, with its themes of pain, betrayal, isolation, fear and desolation, which will, as always, give way to the newness of Easter.



May I suggest that, day by day, by disciplined reading of and reflecting on the scriptures, you walk the Passiontide to Easter journey, from death to life? I've set out below some suggested passages from the Gospel according to St John which you can read, and upon which you can reflect, beginning on Monday, March 30th and ending on

Easter Day. I have not suggested anything for **Palm Sunday**, since the familiar account of the welcoming cries of 'Hosanna' which so easily turned to shouts of 'Crucify' provides ample opportunity for reflecting upon the ease with which welcoming Jesus can turn into rejecting Jesus. The burning of Palm crosses to provide the sorrowful ash of Ash Wednesday is a rich tradition that teaches profound truth. I also attach some prayers for reflection.

If you have access to the internet, you should already be aware of some of the recorded services which have been provided from some of our parishes, and of the opportunities to share in worship via services being live-streamed. I am deeply grateful to the clergy and others who have done so much to maintain links in these and in so many other ways through which contact continues and the faith is proclaimed.

Finally, be assured that you are, as always, held in my thoughts and prayers. May God ever bless you and sustain you.

+John Swansea & Brecon



CALLED TO HELP AND SERVE THOSE IN NEED

Christ has no body on earth now but yours,
no hands but yours,
no feet but yours;
yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on the world;
yours are the feet with which he walks to do good;
yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. *(St Teresa of Ávila (1515-82))*

Lord Jesus Christ,
you humbled yourself in taking the form of a servant,
and in obedience died on the cross for our salvation:
give us the mind to follow you by serving the needs of others
and to proclaim you as Lord and King,
to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

FAITHFUL FOLLOWING

Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits thou hast given me,
for all the pains and insults thou hast borne for me.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly,
day by day. Amen. *(St Richard of Chichester (1197-1253))*

IN COMMUNION WITH CHRIST

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O Good Jesus, hear me.
Within your wounds hide me.
Suffer me not to be separated from you.
From the malicious enemy, defend me.
At the hour of my death, call me
and bid me come to you
That with your saints I may praise you
For ever and ever. Amen. *(Anima Christi)*

FROM DEATH TO LIFE

Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the Cross:
grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
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. Amen.

IN NEW LIFE WITH CHRIST

Living God,
who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ,
to the death of the cross,
and by his glorious resurrection
have delivered us from the power of our enemy:
grant us so to die daily to sin,
that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his risen life;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

SUGGESTED BIBLE JOURNEY – PASSIONTIDE TO EASTER *(Omitting Palm Sunday)*

MONDAY MARCH 30TH TO EASTER DAY

1. John 12: 1-19
2. John 12: 20-46
3. John 13; 1-20
4. John 13: 21-38
5. John 14: 1-27
6. John 15: 1-17
7. John 16: 12-33
8. John 17: 1-25
9. John 18: 1-27
10. John 18: 28-40
11. John 19: 1-37
12. John 19: 38-42
13. John 20: 1-18

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy scriptures
to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.