

THE YEAR OF SAINT MATTHEW
ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

TRUSTING IN LOVE

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT - YEAR A

*Sunday 29 March 2020 – The Re-Dedication of England as
“The Dowry of Mary”*



Grief is a wild ride. We might map its face, predict its stages and guess how long it might last. But this is the luxury of those who, for now anyway, have not been pulled into the land of loss. They have the luxury of observation. But when the loss of a loved one takes up residence in our heart and soul, we become occupied territory.



Perhaps that is why I like the emotionally distraught Jesus being swept on a tidal wave of grief towards the tomb of his friend Lazarus. Only love could have caused the grief in His heart and in the hearts of Martha and Mary. We are all eager for love but, in our eagerness, we forget that every affectional bond we make will be broken by death. The truth we realise is - the deeper the love, the deeper the grief.

Of course, we don't think about this when we are giving our hearts away. Within our short lives, the advent of Love carries the seed of grief. Gabriel Marcel said, 'To love someone is to say, 'Thou shalt never die.' Even if we do not say it out loud, even if we only whisper it in the cellar of our heart, love readies us for tears. The first kiss and the first tears are linked.

It is here we must not forget that this same love will console us. But we must trust this love to take us all the way. It must reveal to us that there is more than meets the eye here. This love which holds us at the bedside of the dying and takes us to their graves after they die, is telling us something very important about God's love. Our reluctance to let loved ones go makes sense as we watch Jesus raising Lazarus from death. The Love that distresses Jesus, that makes Him weep uncontrollably and makes Him go after Lazarus and free him is worth pondering. Love will not let him go so death has to set him free.

The Song of Songs 8,6 sings of the Love that is stronger than death. In the face of the stench of death, this insight may not come easily to us. We might find ourselves being drawn to other solutions to our pain. But it does seem to me that the more we grow our contemplative heart (Mary) and integrate what we find there into our busy lives (Martha) we will find an enduring strength that will bring us through to the other side of grief.

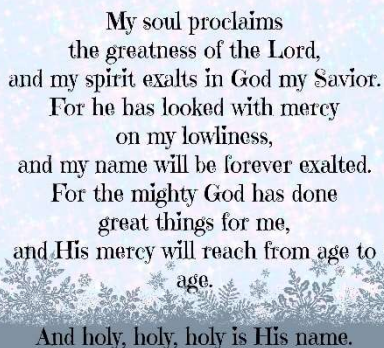
Love brings grief and consolation. St. Paul put it best of all when he wrote, "Do not grieve as others do who have no hope." It is the weeping Jesus who cries out, 'Lazarus, come out!'

SUSTAINING THE GIFTS OF OUR PRESENCE, OUR PRAYER AND OUR SUPPORT IN A TIME OF CRISIS

There is now no doubt that we are in a new situation. For all of us life has changed and it will continue to change over the next few weeks. It is truly a time of 'crisis' where, with the possibility of failure, we can choose to take better care of each other. We do this first by committing ourselves to safer living by keeping our distance from each other in order to slow the spread of the virus. But it isn't just Covid-19 which is a threat to us. When our world becomes smaller and relationships are strained, stress can often turn to distress. The challenge here is to find new ways to live with each other where our love and respect intensifies to match the demands of the new situation.

At the same time, even when we are doing this, we can use our creativity to find new ways to reach out to others. We might begin by asking ourselves what else can we do to support those who are hardest hit by the situation in which we now live. I am thinking here of those who may be frightened and lonely, of those who have lost their incomes and are staring into the abyss of poverty, of those who are on the frontline of care in our hospitals, care homes and caring for loved ones at home. A time of crisis will bring out the best in some and the worst in others. Some may be overwhelmed by anxiety and shut down, while others take risks which put them in danger. It has been heartening to witness so many choosing the middle way by stepping up to support those who are most in need while being mindful of their own safety. Our parish website is being regularly updated with information which may be useful in this regard.

In the daily prayer of the Church, there is a hymn which I love but which we never sing when we gather every Sunday to celebrate Christ's victory over the powers of death. It says in the first and third verse, "Alone, with none but thee my God, I journey on my way. What need I fear, when thou art near, O king of night and day. More safe am I within thy hand, than if a host did round me stand. My life, I yield to thy decree and bow to thy control. In peaceful calm, for from thy arm, no power can wrest my soul. Could earthly omens ever appal, someone who needs the heavenly call".



My soul proclaims
the greatness of the Lord,
and my spirit exalts in God my Savior.
For he has looked with mercy
on my lowliness,
and my name will be forever exalted.
For the mighty God has done
great things for me,
and His mercy will reach from age to
age.
And holy, holy, holy is His name.

I hear in this prayer, an invitation to all of us to experience this time of isolation as if it were a mini retreat. There are endless opportunities on the www to sit at the feet of great teachers to grow in our understanding of what it means to be a disciple. There are endless opportunities for times of prayer and intercession within our families, as we support those who have become seriously ill, and those who are courageously working to help them, with our prayers. If we have more time on our hands, it might be good to use some of that time to phone relatives, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and members of our own parish community to let them know we have them in our heart and to check if they are lacking anything. No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.

I hope you agree that it is vital that we keep our sense of the nearness of God alive at this time. I find Psalm 23 very helpful in this regard. I allow the words to inform the present moment and to remind me that, no matter what happens, our lives are in God's hands. The words can also open a door into a room filled with Peace and it is this Peace which I hope and pray will be yours in the days and weeks ahead. If we can nurture this spirit and strengthen the bonds of love within our families and communities, we will have protected ourselves and each other from the problems which come when we don't have a plan or a vision which holds Us. We offer each other the gift of our presence, our support and our prayer and, in this way, we will carry each other through this dark night and into the dawn.

**The Lord bless us and keep us.
The Lord lift up the light of His face towards us
And keep us
In His Peace.**

TIMES OF MASSES AND MASS INTENTIONS

Prayer for those Affected

Merciful God come to the help of your people. Be our shelter in this time of peril and strengthen the bonds of our community. Bring healing to all who suffer the ravages of disease and assist those whose skill and art can put an end to this affliction. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT – YEAR A

Saturday	28 th	Private Mass	Parish Intentions
Sunday	29 th	Private Mass	Those Living & Suffering with Covid-19
Monday	30 th	Private Mass	Magdalena and George Lbob, RIP
Tuesday	31 st	Private Mass	Chantal Daniel, RIP
Wednesday	1 st	Private Mass	Sid MacGuire, RIP
Thursday	2 nd	Private Mass	Sylvia Semitendi, RIP
Friday	3 rd	Private Mass	May Piddock, RIP
Saturday	4 th	Private Mass	Thanksgiving – Gillian Aslin

PALM SUNDAY of the Passion of the Lord – YEAR A

Sunday	5 th	Private Mass	Parish Intentions
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PLEASE READ THE NOTICE ON THE CHURCH DOOR:

CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES

A letter from the President and Vice-President on behalf of all the Bishops of the Conference

If you need to speak to the Parish Office or Parish Priest please telephone or email the Parish Office, see the website for updates, details in the box below. Please don't come to the Presbytery door unless posting through the letterbox.

Parish Office: 39 Braccan Walk, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 1BE

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Telephone: 01344 425729 Email: stjb@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

Pastoral Care: 07394 440938 email: pastoralcare@bracknellcatholicchurch.org

Website: bracknellcatholicchurch.org

Follow us on Facebook

Please make cheques payable to (full name): PRC DTR BRACKNELL ST JOSEPH

Parish Priest: Fr. Daniel McAvoy

Deacon: Rev. Aidan Lynch

Parish Secretary: Elizabeth Fisher

Pastoral Assistant: Mary McNab

Safeguarding Representatives: Sarah Birch, Marion McGuire, Paula Read

Safeguarding email: safeguarding@bracknellcatholicchurch.org

PARISH OF ST JOSEPH and ST MARGARET CLITHEROW, BRACKNELL