

**Wednesday 6th May 2020**

*And now, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today…Deuteronomy 10.12-end*

Dear Friends

This verse is taken for the Old Testament reading set for Evening Prayer today. It speaks to me of what we have all been doing these past six weeks – loving and caring for one another in God’s name - and what we must continue to do for weeks to come too. At times it is very hard and the days can seem monotonous and long. At other times we are given glimpses of God’s love through the thoughtfulness of others and it reduces us to tears. We are reminded that we are blessed.

The greatest of all blessings is faith for it roots you in something that no one can take from you, and connects you with a worldwide community of believers that embraces the globe with love, hope and joy. I wonder how many have found their faith quietly given new life these past weeks?

This morning, the Bishop of Worcester, +John Inge, wrote to all clergy with two messages. First, that we may now toll single church bells in celebration of carers on Thursday evening, and for VE Day this Friday and on other suitable occasions. This is a simple change, but one that will give a little life to our churches which is fantastic. Second, that clergy may, if they wish, record or livestream services from within their churches from this Sunday. I need to explain why Ray and I have taken the decision not to do this.

When the Bishops asked that we close the churches for public worship one argument that was given was that it was an act of solidarity with our communities; that the church should be seen in the midst of the communities it serves, experiencing the lockdown as our communities experience it. As nothing has yet changed on that front, it feels quite wrong that we should be able to enjoy our churches whilst our congregations cannot. So, the clergy of this parish will return to church only when you can too.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support, experience and offer feedback on our zoom services. We are learning so much! Each week the experience continues to improve as we all relax into it and learn how best to use the software. The simplest guidance is to keep your mic turned off except for the socialisation before and after the service and during high points of the liturgy itself – such as the responses during the Eucharistic prayer, Lord’s Prayer etc. Please do not have your mic on during the readings, sermon or intercessions.

This Sunday, we mark the beginning of Christian Aid Week with a service led by Rosemary Sumner. Please do join us and please do support Christian Aid Week financially this year.

Next week sees the Bromsgrove clergy involved in more funerals in one week than at any other time during the pandemic. I alone have five funerals in three days including our beloved Sue (Davidson) on Wednesday at 1.15pm. Please do pray for her family and friends, especially those unable to attend the service due to the tight restriction on numbers.

Finally, an encouragement please to visit and use the parish web site – bromsgroveparish.org.uk. There is a growing volume of material available on the site, especially under Online Church. Please have an explore.

Until we’re in touch again, please look after yourselves. That seems even more important this week as some people seem to be breaking the lockdown on their own account. We’re not through this yet by any means and we must all take even greater care in the weeks to come.

This comes with my continuing love and prayers,

David Ford, Rector

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