**Letter from the Vicar**

Holy Saturday, 3 April 2021

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It has been an immense pleasure to be able to walk with you, and lead you through Holy Week – so much has taken place that was deprived us last year. Our procession on Palm Sunday gave way to quiet reflections on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and then to the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday to receive the great Commandment to *love another*. There we recalled Christ’s Last Supper and his giving of himself in the Eucharist before spending time in the garden of Gethsemane at the Altar of Repose – watching, waiting, praying. On Good Friday we walked with Christ in his final journey of betrayal and denial, condemnation, and suffering as we came before the Cross and gave thanks for his paradigm changing act of love and sacrifice to bring forgiveness and atonement for all. Today, is a quiet day, liturgically, as we recall Christ lying dead in the tomb. But later (in observance of ancient thought that the new day begins at sundown) we will begin our celebrations of the Resurrection with the Vigil and Easter Ceremonies and then continue our celebrations tomorrow and throughout the 50 days of Easter.

Reflecting on last year, I recall feeling the sense of abandonment Christ must have felt on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday – that sense of being alone and cut off, of fear and anxiety – it felt very personal. This year I have been reminded that Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross was for everyone – for all of us, and that we are held in the palm of God’s hand even when things go wrong. I am looking forward to celebrating the Resurrection with you and seeing how God will speak to us. Last year, as part of my celebrations Sophie and I danced for joy in what became a series of Badly Dancing Vicar videos my wife posted on Facebook. Please note I have no intention of subjecting you to this again! But for Sophie and me it was a very organic way to express our joy and we may well do so again in private.

On Maundy Thursday I was invited to St Albans Abbey to renew my Ministerial Vows and collect the Holy Oils for all the Churches in this Deanery. At the service, Bishop Richard preached very powerfully on what is “normal” and I commend this to you. [*https://youtu.be/XPynZQXbMDY*](https://youtu.be/XPynZQXbMDY) It begins about 25 minutes into the service. “Normal” is an interesting idea. Last year I recall talking about the “new normal” a lot and asking what life will be like post-pandemic. As we emerge from lockdown 3.0 we again need to ask these questions. What are our priorities as a Church? How are we to engage with the Gospel and our community? How do with live as ‘Easter people’ with confidence in the resurrection for all people? One thing is certain: we need to rebuild our fellowship, assuring people that they are always welcome and beloved of God. It has been pleasing to see (since resuming in-person Public Worship) that our congregations have been steadily increasing week on week. But we are still significantly down on attendance levels pre-pandemic - at about 50%. If you are worried about returning to in-person worship and would like to come to a ‘quieter’ service to test the water then the Sunday 8.00am Holy Communion or the Wednesday 10.00am Holy Communion services might be for you. That being said, there is still capacity at all our services.

I look forward to seeing you tomorrow as we celebrate the victory of life over death in Christ’s Resurrection. Remember to wrap-up warm as we will begin and end the 10.00am Parish Eucharist outside. But for now I leave you with my prayers and best wishes, and in anticipation of later:

Alleluia! Alleluia! Christ is Risen.

He is Risen indeed. Alleluia! Alleluia”

In Christ,

 The Reverend Michael Macey

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