

NEWSLETTER

ALL SAINTS, SCRAPTOFT & NETHERHALL - May 2020

Learning from Lockdown

As is no doubt the case with most of you, these weeks have given me plenty of time to read, think, and reflect. I've read all sorts of material: novels, articles, theological matter and more. But I have found myself particularly reflecting on what it is to be human – a fragile being on an equally fragile planet. And in my deliberations I have been assisted by a concept in Buddhism called 'interbeing.' This is the idea that there is nothing that is just 'me' or 'I', but that we are all one with everything that has been created. Therefore, what one person does in some way has an effect on everyone.



When I was at theological college in Lincoln, training for ordination, we had to study all sorts of things: liturgy and worship, of course; church history, ethics, New and Old Testament studies, New Testament Greek and more. But the one area that really excited me was Phil and Phen – otherwise known as the philosophy and phenomenology of religion. Some of this came back to me recently when thinking about that concept of 'interbeing', because Christian thought has something similar called pan-en-theism: the belief that God is in everything and everything is in God.

Now I don't want to bamboozle you with fancy long words, but I thought you needed to know where I'm coming from for the rest of this letter. Because I feel this time is crucial for us, both as individuals and as a world, and I believe we have the chance to learn something vitally important which will enable us to go forward into the future with a chance to rescue ourselves from the mess we have got ourselves into.

So what can we learn from lockdown?

I guess we have to address what the problems are to begin answering this, and one I think is paramount is to counteract what has been termed the "hyper individualism" that is rife in our world. In so many ways, life seems to have become about 'looking after No. 1', and by this I don't mean just 'me', but only really caring about myself and those very close to me. We have bought into the idea that we can have more and more of just about anything we want, we can travel wherever and whenever we want and all without consequences. But of course there are consequences, and we have begun to see that some of these are huge. Yet we continue to live a life of 'I want' and fall into the advertising hype all too easily.

This all feeds an individualistic outlook and we have seen examples of it during the early days of lockdown: the hoarding of toilet roll, flour and pasta to name one! Where was the thought for others when people just ransacked the shelves for their own needs? But this is just one example and we don't have to look far to see all sorts of others in our modern lifestyle.

How like the example of Jesus is all this then? Miles off, sadly, because surely Jesus taught us to have care, compassion and love for everyone. His command was to preach the Good News to all people, not just a select few and his compassion was for everyone too (including 'your enemy'). In his life he was concerned that all were fed and that healing was open to anyone. The life of Jesus, to me, seems to embody those thoughts of interbeing and God in everything I spoke of before.

Joanna Macy, a renowned Buddhist thinker and environmental campaigner, spoke about 'interbeing' in these words: "You're not just a separate organism sitting here breathing. You are not only breathing but being *breathed*. You need an oxygen-producing web of life to breathe – you need trees and you need plankton."

Interbeing begins to make sense when I begin to see God in everything and everything in God. This then means that ALL my actions have consequences – not just for me and my loved ones, but for everyone and anyone, and indeed the planet, the creation of which we are part.

Many of us have reconnected with our gardens (if we are lucky to have one) during this period of lockdown. Others have begun to see more as they have taken their daily exercise walk. We have not been so rushed. I have even enjoyed hours of weeding more than ever, probably because I haven't felt the pressure to get back to 'work.' I have, to use another concept borrowed from Buddhism, been much more mindful and able to appreciate the present moment, rather than constantly looking ahead to what is coming up.

Jesus clearly understood this need: he often took himself away from the hurly-burly to spend time alone and with God. His parables and teachings are full of his mindfulness: he saw things in situations that others missed and his focus was very much on those he was with. In his teaching he encourages us to keep our eyes and minds and hearts open – open to the promptings of the Spirit so that we can truly appreciate all that God has given us.

So what can we learn from lockdown? My hope from this period of isolation is that we will learn something that we can positively take into the future. This is, of course, easier said than done. The temptation will be strong to simply return to how we lived before. In some ways we may feel it is impossible to do otherwise, because whenever and however this period ends, the urge to return to the unlimited travel, shopping and 'growth' model will be irresistible. But for our sakes and the planet's sake, I pray we can learn from the concept of 'interbeing' and live lives that better reflect that God is in everything and everything is in God. For if we really take this to heart then our lives will show our love and care for everything and everyone around us.

We can also take with us the knowledge that God is with us whatever happens, in our joys and sorrows, our good days and bad, and through his Spirit will enable us to live as people who truly care for everything he has given us – as people who really think about our actions and their consequences.

If we let it, this time can be a fruitful and incredibly important one, if we take the opportunities we have to reconnect with our Creator on every level and then to live thankful lives which make this evident to the world.

I hope and pray you all stay safe and well and are enriched by every single thing God has brought to your lives.

With every blessing. *Fr Martin*

Prayer during lockdown

Prayers for peace in the suffering

Heavenly Father, as weeks go by, we see and hear about the people this terrible illness is impacting. People isolated from those they love – those infected and hoping to recover at home, those hospitalised and ventilated in intensive care units and those who have sadly not recovered. Where funerals are not the love filled celebration of life families want. We pray Lord, that amongst this pain and suffering your love and peace shines in these dark times.

Prayers for life as lockdown continues

Lord Jesus, although we are isolated in our households, we thank you for the sunshine we have experienced over recent days, perhaps from our windows, balconies, or gardens. It reminds us of Your love for all creation. Lord we ask that we might show grace and patience as we continue to lockdown. And Father, thank you for all key workers, we ask that You bless and protect them from contracting COVID-19 as they continue to serve our communities.

Prayers for the Global Health and Emergency Response

Father, thank you for the way charitable organisations are already responding to COVID-19, and we pray that nothing stops them from protecting the world's most vulnerable children and families. Providing

soap, hygiene kits and hand wash stations; self-isolation zones in urban slum and refugee areas; and supporting healthcare systems and workers to help stop the spread of infection, where there are concerns about the immediate and long-term impact of COVID-19.

Prayers with Children

Dear God, I pray for my friends.

They are not allowed to go to school or come over to play.

I'm sad because I miss them.

They must be feeling miserable and lonely as well. Please be close to them.

Please be with the people who are looking after them. May we be able to get together safely once again soon.

A Prayer for the World

God of love and hope, you made the world and care for all creation, but the world feels strange right now. The news is full of stories about Coronavirus. Some people are worried that they might get ill. Others are anxious for their family and friends.

Be with them and help them to find peace.

We pray for the doctors and nurses and scientists, and all who are working to discover the right medicines to help those who are ill.

Thank you that even in these anxious times, you are with us.

Help us to put our trust in you and keep us safe.

READINGS FOR IN EASTERTIDE

Sunday 26th April - Easter 3

Acts 2: 14a & 36-41
1 Peter 1: 17-23
Luke 24: 13-35

Sunday 3rd May - Easter 4

Acts 2: 42-47
1 Peter 2: 19-25
John 10: 1-10

Sunday 10th May - Easter 5

Acts 7: 55-60
1 Peter 2: 2-10
John 14: 1-14

Sunday 17th May - Easter 6

Acts 17: 22-31
1 Peter 3: 13-22
John 14: 15-21

Thursday 21st - Ascension Day

Acts 1: 1-11
Ephesians 1: 15-23
Luke 24: 44-53

Sunday 24th May - Easter 7

Acts 1: 6-14
1 Peter 4: 12-14
John 17: 1-11

Sunday 31st May - Pentecost

Acts 2: 1-21
1 Corinthians 12: 3b-13
John 20: 19-23

Daily Readings in May

1st Hebrews 11:6
2nd 1 John 5:14-15
3rd Romans 12:12
4th 2 Chronicles 7:14
5th Philippians 4:6-7
6th James 5:16
7th 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
8th Colossians 4:5-6
9th Romans 8:1-2
10th Matthew 18:15
11th Ephesians 4:32
12th Proverbs 31:10
13th Proverbs 31:30
14th Psalm 139:13-14
15th Ecclesiastes 11:5
16th Zephaniah 3:17
17th Romans 11:33
18th Hebrews 6:10
19th James 3:17-18
20th Romans 15:5-6
21st 1 Corinthians 1:10
22nd Galatians 5:13
23rd Romans 15:2
24th Romans 12:10
25th James 1:19
26th John 3:17
27th Acts 20:24
28th Romans 12:15
29th Psalm 103:17-18
30th Psalm 56:4
31st 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17