

# *This Week at St Mary's*

APRIL 26<sup>th</sup> 2020

## GROWING IN ADVERSITY

We're now well into the fifth week of the 'stay at home'. We have at least another couple to go. I doubt I'm alone in not finding it (at) all easy. Not being able to meet around Easter was a very high price. Jan Buckland commented that this is the first Easter Day for 75 years that she has not had communion at St Mary's. There is nothing to replace being together, entering the amazing saving acts of the God and Father of Jesus. I am sure we will all appreciate this the more when restrictions are lifted.

Two things are on my heart. The limitation on numbers who can attend and what can be done **at a funeral** will be leaving many (very) raw in their grief. If you know people in this position, can I encourage **lots of phone and written contact**? Nothing could be more important. I hope one result of this crisis will be for us to see that restricting (as has become common) the moment of farewell to the immediate family may well not allow for good grieving. Being surrounded and supported by all feeling the loss is much preferable. +

**Praying together** at this time. Some people are discovering new ways to pray together, and I hope we at St Mary's can do the same. How about something like a form of compline where we 'meet' over a (skype or equivalent) audio call? 15-20 minutes although it could become longer if desired. Compline is a profound way to end the day, to include a short 'examen' (reflection on the day past) silence, some 'lectio divina' (slow reading of scripture) and silent prayer. Drop me an email to say you'd like to explore further.

*Tom Gillman*

### **GIVING MONEY**

Best done **online** but **cheque** also welcome. Preferable from the church's viewpoint is a **Standing Order** (NatWest 560061 00834602) For **One-off donations**, Tony Mitchell (churchwarden) writes: *Please will those who regularly make their contributions to our income via the yellow envelopes/plate do these via either the QR code or new Donate button; I've tried both and they work! Having to close the church has affected our rental income as well as donations: so now the need is for you, if you can, to increase your financial commitment to St Mary's.*

## RETURNING TO POETRY - Charles Price and R. S. Thomas' The Coming

I've always struggled with poetry. Throughout our school years my sister and I had 'Speech and Drama' lessons, which are rather like private instrumental lessons. We learnt to act, mime, improvise, and of course, recite poetry. I'm fairly certain Aristotle said that "a great teacher is a great actor" (heavily abridged), and I rely daily on my acting abilities in the classroom. However, I've never needed to recite a poem, but I think that is because I know that I can't.

Despite those formative years learning poetry to recite by heart, I simply cannot remember any of them. To rub salt into this wound, my sister, on the other hand, can recite many of the poems that she learnt.

Nevertheless, I have 'returned' to poetry in the last year. When teaching a hymn in whole school hymn practice I always start with the words, and the best hymns always have the best poetry in them. Getting pupils to see how words and music are wrapped together in expressive emotion is an exciting part of my job.

For Christmas I received R.S. Thomas' Everyman's Poetry, from, you guessed it, my sister. I've been drawn to The Coming. Unlike much hymnal poetry there is no rhyming pattern, but there is expression, emotion, and a story. To me, it speaks as much about Easter as it does Advent. There is plenty of input here, not least the image of a broken world and the son saying 'Let me go there.'

And God held in his hand  
A small globe. Look, he said.  
The son looked. Far off,  
As through water, he saw  
A scorched land of fierce  
Colour. The light burned  
There; crusted buildings  
Cast their shadows; a bright  
Serpent, a river  
Uncoiled itself, radiant  
With slime.

On a bare  
Hill a bare tree saddened  
The sky. Many people  
Held out their thin arms  
To it, as though waiting  
For a vanished April  
To return to its crossed  
Boughs. The son watched  
Them. Let me go there, he said.

## REPORT FROM MILITARY CHAPLAIN JOHN VINCENT

When I left Nottingham back in July, I had assumed my new posting (Senior Chaplain London District and Chaplain to The Household Division) would be largely running services in The Guards' Chapel and supporting the Household Division in its function of State Ceremonial and public duties. Yet part of my role is also to support London District, which is the London Headquarters of the Army and, like all regional formations, has responsibility for providing support to civilian authorities.

As the Coronavirus pandemic spreads, the military has responded accordingly. I am unable to talk about operational details, but you will have read in the media about some of the work that the military is doing in London. What perhaps is not acknowledged are the many others who are working out of sight of the public; especially those individuals who are embedded with the civilian authorities and have responsibility to advise, support, plan and force generate. Many are individual augmentees from other units, working away from home and putting in long hours in stressful environments.

Social distancing and the dispersal of soldiers across London makes chaplaincy support difficult, yet The Holy Spirit is creative, and will show us new ways of offering pastoral support in these times, not least of all through social media and WhatsApp. In these times of Isolation, it is through a phone call or a text that others know they are being supported and are loved.

This is not the first time in my military career I have found myself in a strange place, but I take heart as I have done before, from Psalm 139.

"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there....your right hand will hold me fast."

*(John regularly led services at St Mary's in 2018/19)*

### **THE MEADOWS FOOD BANK**

The need to support food banks at this time cannot be overstated. Since the end of March, many people's income will have dried up. Thanks so much to those who have already responded to help the Meadows Food Bank. Needed: **Breakfast cereal, Biscuits, Small bags of sugar, Jam, marmalade, Tinned rice pudding, Squash/juice, Tinned carrots, Washing up liquid, Shower gel, Men's deodorant, Shaving foam, Shampoo.** Contact Beth Mitchell 07775707855 0115 9476736 tony.m1941@icloud.com to take further.

Wherever you are, we extend a very warm greeting to you, especially if you've recently discovered St Mary's

*We regret that in the current public health context, St Mary's has to remain closed.*

**11.00am SUNDAY SERVICE - livestreamed**

*(See our website and follow the link, including for Order of Service)*

*Look in the Music and Resources section of our website for opportunities to experience St Mary's worship*

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Please continue to pray for

Estelle Barks  
John Bowers  
John Conway  
Harry Palmer  
Mike Ridley

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