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WE MUST FACE THESE DIFFICULTIES TOGETHER

PASTORAL LETTER OF ARCHBISHOP GEORGE STACK FEAST OF ST JOSEPH – 19TH MARCH 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

We are living in strange and worrying times. Who would have thought that, following the natural disasters of recent months, we would now be facing the dangerous realities surrounding the coronavirus pandemic? Yet this is the new reality with which we have to live. We have to adjust our everyday patterns and lifestyle to these very challenging circumstances. I want to write personally to each person in the Archdiocese of Cardiff as we face these difficulties together, and in support of others in our local community.

Good health is a precious gift. The advance of medical science and the development of our National Health Service over the years have ensured that the quality of our lives has rightly improved. "Life is precious. Handle with Prayer" read a Wayside Pulpit some years ago. These words seem particularly relevant during the health crisis we now face. I have attached two prayers which you may find helpful to use personally whether self-isolating or trying to go about the daily business of life.

Prayers and good works

Prayer and good works are the hallmark of the follower of Jesus Christ. We do pray for all those who have been infected by the virus, especially those with underlying health conditions which make them even more prone to serious

illness. As good citizens, it is essential that we heed government and medical advice, whether it be self-isolating or not gathering in big numbers in addition to undertaking the basic hygiene instructions. Working from home where possible, avoiding non-essential travel, limiting social outings. All of these measures have their place in helping to avoid infection as well as the danger of cross contamination.

They may also contribute to our Lenten discipline. The 8.8 million people in this country over the age of 70 must obviously have our special care as we are particularly vulnerable in this pandemic. A significant proportion of our clergy also fit into this category. In the Church, we have a good network of outreach to the elderly, sick and housebound. At this time, the good neighbour will ensure that those living alone should be contacted and reassured that help is near at hand, should it be needed.

Our churches will remain open

Bearing in mind what I have written, you will know that the Bishops of England and Wales have implemented the decision to suspend the public celebration of Mass in our churches on Sundays and Holy Days. This decision includes a dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass because of the danger of these times. This cessation includes weekday Mass as well, although the priest may celebrate Mass privately without a congregation. Our churches will remain open wherever possible in order that people may use them for private prayer and devotions. The essence of these measures is that people must not gather in groups with all the dangers of cross infection this entails.

This decision has not been taken lightly, recognising that the Mass is the hallmark of Catholic faith and practice. A number of churches have the capacity to 'live stream' the celebration of Mass in the absence of a congregation. It would be good to view these transmissions and join in the prayers with missals, the scriptures and other worship aids. Failing that, traditional Catholic practices such as the Prayer of the Church, Lectio Divina, the Rosary, Stations of the Cross and the desire to make a spiritual communion. These actions will join us together as members of the Mystical Body of Christ. We may be physically more separated at this time, but we remain united through faith and baptism in bonds which cannot be broken. No one is forgotten in the

prayers of the Church.

A time of testing

I want to assure the priests and people of the Diocese of my prayers for you and your loved ones, and for your parish community. I am grateful to those who have worked hard to provide information and help not least through the Archdiocese

website, social media and "The Catholic People". These days of Lent are a time of testing as we follow our suffering Lord Jesus to Calvary and beyond. The suffering of the cross to which we attach ourselves cannot be avoided in the painful circumstances of our lives. These are not of our

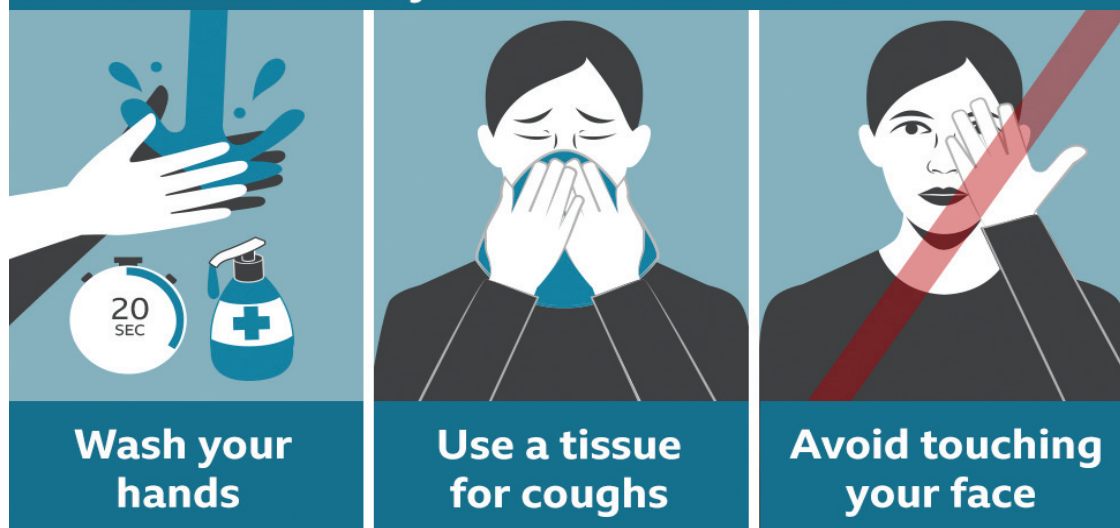
choosing. The cross cannot be avoided. It has to be embraced in faith and lived through in order to catch a glimpse of what lies beyond. Although our celebration of this Easter may have to be more muted than in past years, the truth it celebrates will never diminish. "Life and death contended. Combat strangely ended". Our belief is that life will triumph over death. That light will conquer darkness. The words of St. John Paul II are profoundly significant at this time:

"Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song".

With every blessing
George Archbishop of Cardiff

For further advice on the Corona virus look at the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales site at <https://www.cbcew.org> and the Welsh government site at <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>.

Coronavirus: What you need to do



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'Battersea boy' who only wanted to be a simple parish priest but became Archbishop of Cardiff and later Southwark

Peter Smith liked to say that he was "just a Battersea boy". Certainly the tenth Roman Catholic Archbishop of Southwark, to give him his full title, was never accused of putting on clerical airs or graces.

Puffing a Silk Cut cigarette and sipping a gin and tonic, Smith would relay, with mischief in his blue eyes, how he had tried without success to evade high ecclesiastical office. "All I wanted in life was to be a simple parish priest, and I've been thwarted," said the man who was twice an archbishop.

In 1995 he had been asked to be Bishop of East Anglia. "Can I say no?" was his initial response. Six years later he was in the shrine of the Virgin Mary in Walsingham, Norfolk, when he took a call from the papal nuncio. "It is good that you are in Walsingham because Our Lady said 'yes' (to the Angel Gabriel)," the nuncio purred down the phone. "Now you are going to say 'yes' to the Holy Father and go to Cardiff."

Trouble shooter "But the previous archbishop hasn't resigned yet," sputtered Smith. However, the incumbent, John Ward, had the previous day been obliged by the Vatican to resign his see, after a scandal involving two paedophile priests in his archdiocese. Both were jailed. Amid the ensuing uproar, the Vatican selected the unassuming Smith as an ideal trouble-shooter. In Cardiff he proved a gentle leader, approachable, concerned, ready to listen, always deploying common sense. He combined the sharpness of a canon lawyer with a straightforward manner. "Child abuse is a dreadful wrong and there is no justification for it," he stated. In 2015 Smith was named in a court case against Father Anthony McSweeney, who was jailed for abusing a boy at a care home. In 1998 McSweeney had been found with videos of teenage boys, but this was not reported to the police. McSweeney had written to Smith, then Bishop of East Anglia and his former seminary rector, claiming that he had been removed from his parish after being found with a video of gay pornography. On this understanding McSweeney was ordered to have psychotherapy and appointed by Smith to a Norwich parish.

When McSweeney was arrested during Operation Fernbridge, the police investigation into an alleged

paedophile ring, Smith was aghast that McSweeney had lied to him. "He could not understand how anybody who professed to love God could abuse anyone," recalled a colleague. As Smith walked through London wearing a dog collar, strangers unaware of who he was sometimes shouted anti-clerical abuse. "Sometimes people spit," he told an acquaintance who had witnessed this. "It is just how it is." Peter Smith was born in southwest London in 1943, the younger son of Cuthbert Smith, a technical clerk at a printing press, and Kathleen (née Kennedy). He attended Clapham grammar school and then worked for a year at Coutts & Co, the Queen's bankers, where he smoked a pipe. The day he blew ash over a letter, he swapped to Rothmans, becoming a lifelong chainsmoker. Coutts offered Smith a post after he finished his degree in law in 1966 at Exeter University, but by then he had sensed a call to the priesthood, to the surprise of his Anglican father.

Ordained in 1972 Upon arrival at St John's Seminary in Wonersh, Surrey, he was greeted by a clipboard-clutching priest who remarked, "Ah yes, Smith. You're from the world." (Many training for the priesthood had attended junior seminary.) He was ordained in 1972, sent to Rome to study canon law and returned to Britain to teach canon law at St John's Seminary. He became rector in 1985. Smith preferred aspirants to the priesthood to have experienced life before applying for seminary. Eyes-a-glint, he would say: "They should experience what it is like to have a girl flutter her eyelids at them before they make the commitment to lifelong celibacy."

Loving solitude and the sea, he moved to Whitstable in Kent after retiring. A plain man, he detested gossip and sauce "mucking up" his steak. After his transfer in 2010 to Southwark Smith had mourned the loss of his rose garden in Cardiff. Asked if he had a garden in London, he snorted: "Garden? I'm living in the middle of a traffic island. I have one weed which I'm cultivating carefully."

The Most Rev Peter Smith, Archbishop of Southwark, 2010-19, was born on October 21, 1943. He died of cancer on March 6, 2020, aged 76

The above obituary was printed in The Times and we are grateful to The Times for permission to print it here.



The Tablet's tribute to Archbishop Peter

Archbishop Peter's long-term public affairs adviser Charles Wooky remarked that you knew you had arrived at the right venue when you saw him standing at the door, cigarette in hand (often already on his second), amiably chatting to anybody he happened to meet.

That is also my recollection when I attended several events with the Archbishop. In one formal dinner at Cardiff City Hall he disappeared for several minutes and I met him at the door of City Hall.

He had received me into the Catholic Church at the advanced age of 64 at St David's Metropolitan Cathedral. When he asked me what my Baptismal name would be I had not thought of that but had the wit to respond that as my Christian names were James and Thomas I already carried the names of three of Jesus's disciples - James, James the Lesser and Thomas, of doubting fame.

The Archbishop laughed in that warm and friendly manner of his with put everyone he met at ease. As Charles Wooky said in The Tablet Article on his arrival in Wales he became. widely liked and respected figure and people loved his down-to-earth style and complete lack of pomp and ceremony. But as a priest and bishop he navigated the Church's response to proposed new legislation on embryo research, adoption, gay marriage and

several other issues that raised challenging moral questions.

Charles Wooky referred to the Archbishop's as "combining firm convictions, calm wisdom and clarity of thought and argument with a genuine desire for engagement and dialogue. His Approach was marked by a principled pragmatism - always true to the Church's moral and social teaching while engaging with others to advance respect for human dignity and the common good."

The Tablet article stressed that Archbishop Peter always sought ways of creating a dialogue between opposing views. He initiated a lovely debate at the Wellcome Foundation broadcast on Radio 4 that brought together scientists, philosophers and theologians to discuss proposed legislation that would widen the scope of research involving the so-called "hybrid" embryos.

Charles Wooky, from his years of working with his boss, added: "He was first and foremost a priest. He was deeply wise and exuded calmness. His personal warmth, lack of judgementalism, and generosity with his time meant that people who sought his counsel were often deeply helped."

This, indeed, was the Archbishop and priest we knew during his time as Archbishop of Cardiff.

James Campbell

CORONAVIRUS PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES

In the light of the developing Coronavirus situation, the following precautionary measures are given to parishes as an elaboration on that already circulated by the Bishops Conference of England and Wales:

The usual handshake at the Sign of Peace should not be given. If the Sign of Peace does take place, a bow or cursory nod of the head will be sufficient during this time.

The offering of the Chalice at Holy Communion is suspended until further notice.

The Holy Water stoups should be emptied in order to limit the possibility of cross infection.

Your Catholic People...

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Articles to be received by the 20th of the month for inclusion in the following month.

A CORONAVIRUS PRAYER

Jesus Christ, you travelled through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love.

Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbours from helping one another.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders.

Jesus Christ, you travelled

through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” Come to our aid now, that we may experience your healing love.

Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow.

Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with you in your eternal peace.

Be with families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know your peace.

Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process.

May they know your protection and peace.

Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks. May they know your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth.

Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us your peace.

Jesus Christ, heal us.

A PRAYER OF POPE FRANCIS TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

O Mary

You shine continuously along our journey as a sign of salvation and hope
We entrust ourselves to you.
Health of the Sick,
who at the Cross were near to the pain of Jesus
Keeping your faith firm.

You, Salvation of the people,
Know what we need, and we trust that
you will provide for those needs so that,
as at Cana of Galilee
joy and celebration may return after this moment of trial

Help us.
Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the will of the father
and to do what Jesus tells us,
He who took our sufferings upon Himself,
and took up our sorrows to bring us,
through the Cross,
to the joy of the resurrection.
Amen.

We seek refuge under your protection,
O Holy Mother of God.
Do not despise our pleas.
We who are put to the test
And deliver us from every danger,
O glorious and blessed Virgin.

Pope Francis



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3 minute reading and meditation with Teresa O'Driscoll
Email: teresa@teresaodriscoll.co.uk

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'Speak, Lord; for Your servant is listening.'
1 Samuel 3:10



ARE YOU LISTENING?

It could be that you diligently take everything to the Lord in prayer. That, of itself, would reveal your wonderful trust in your heavenly Father. However, do you as assiduously, ask Him for direct answers to dilemmas? Or for His opinion on the various situations and decisions that inevitably crop up in life? You will understand by those questions that I am making the distinction between, say, praying for a situation to be resolved versus listening for God to tell you something. If listening for Christ's input is something you would like to practise more you may find the meditation below helpful.

1. Read 1 Samuel 3:9-10
2. Sit up straight and close your eyes. Breathe in deeply through the nose. Hold a few seconds. Breathe out through the mouth and as you do so feel the whole of your body relax.

3. Now meditate for a few moments on the fact that, yes, God wants you to speak to Him but also, crucially, He wants you to listen to Him. In that way Jesus will be an intimate part of your everyday life. Then you can be sure that you are doing His will...
4. Now say this prayer – or one of your own – 'Dear heavenly Father, I know that you hear me when I speak to You. I am sorry though, for the times when I do not listen for Your reply. Please help me to be a more effective part of Your Great Plan by reminding me, often, to listen expectantly for Your comments and insights. I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen'
5. When you are ready breathe in and out deeply as before. Then open your eyes and have a big stretch.

Hoping the above helps you to listen more often for God's word in your daily life.

God bless
Teresa

For more on the above topic please see Teresa's blog: <http://teresaodriscoll.blogspot.co.uk/>
Teresa O'Driscoll is the author of 9 Days to Heaven, How to make everlasting meaning of your life.



Our welfare needs in this crisis

At his Mass Pope Francis reflected on the deaths of medical staff in Italy: "I received the news that in these days, a number of doctors and priests have died, I don't know if there were a few nurses. They were infected... because they were serving the sick. Let's pray for them, for their families. I thank God for the example of heroism they give us in caring for the sick."

We should join our prayers to the Holy Father's for all medical staff in our own country and in others who put their lives at risk serving the sick.

There are further measures to control the spread of the virus. Among these measures is the closing of places of worship. While it heavies the heart further that we should be asked to stay away from Church, these measures are necessary for the welfare of our communities, especially the most vulnerable. As such, the doors to our churches will now close until the end of the lockdown.

Our clergy will remain available in times of need in accordance with government guidelines. They also continue to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass daily. We are grateful to a number of our churches who continue to live stream the Mass for us to join them. Stay connected by visiting <https://rcadc.org/staying-connected/> as we make more resources available to you in the days and weeks ahead.


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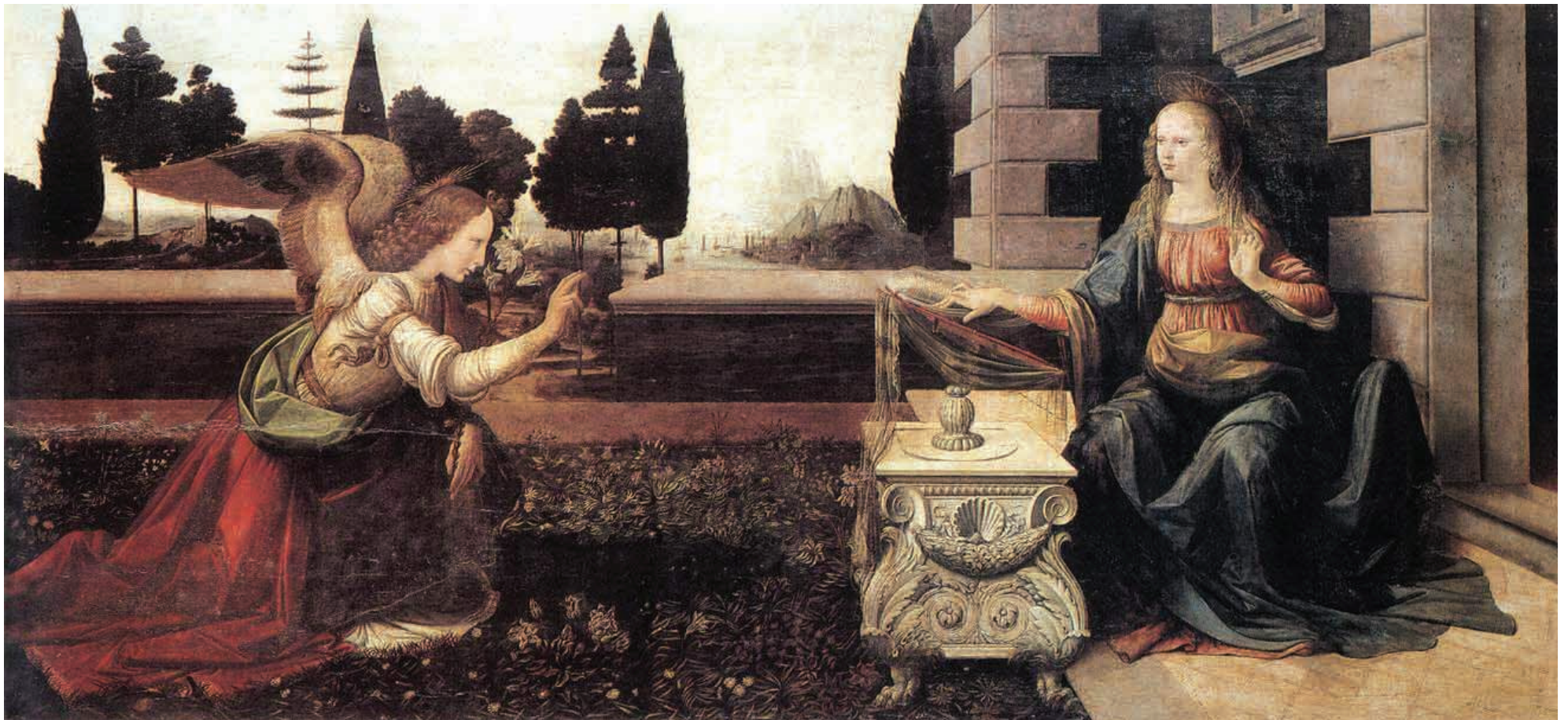
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Cardinal prays the Our Father and reflects on the Annunciation



On the great Feast of the Annunciation, at 11am UK time, Pope Francis prayed the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples – almost certainly the first prayer many of us learned as children – and wants Christians and all people of good will to pray with him.

We pray the Lord's Prayer – the 'Our Father' – for an end to the COVID-19 pandemic and to offer prayerful support to the health care staff and other key workers who are tirelessly keeping the wheels rolling for so many of us in isolation.

Cardinal prays with us

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, from his private chapel in Westminster, prays the Lord's Prayer and offers his thoughts on the great Feast of the Annunciation – when the angel Gabriel was sent from God to the Virgin Mary, at Nazareth, to tell her that she will bring forth a son and call Him Jesus.

Full message

Today is the great Feast of the Annunciation – the moment when the Angel Gabriel came to Mary and presented to her the Word of God, which she accepted with an open heart and to which she gave her flesh in the incarnation.

Today, then, is the day of the first joys of Mary. And we turn to her not only as our Mother of Sorrows, but also as our mother of joys.

Now, today, Pope Francis has asked Christians right around the world to pray with him at midday in Rome, which is eleven o'clock here, to pray the Our Father with him for the health of the world for our strength against this virus and for our healing.

So please pray with me now:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Today, another prayer has been offered to us as well from the bishops of the continent of Europe – a continent in which this virus is biting so deeply now.

So let me read for you this prayer – a prayer for our protection and indeed for our help:

God, Our Father,
Creator of the world, almighty and merciful.
Out of love for us, you sent your son into the world
as the doctor of our souls and bodies.

Look upon your children,
who in this difficult time of confusion and dismay
in many regions of Europe and the world
turn to you seeking strength, salvation and relief.

Deliver us from illness and fear,
comfort our sick and their families
give wisdom to our rulers,
energy and reward to our doctors,
nurses and volunteers,
and eternal life to those who have died.

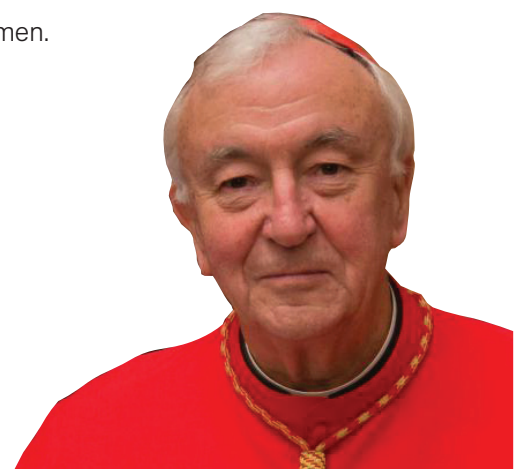
Do not abandon us in this moment of trial,
But deliver us from all evil.

We ask this of you who with the Son and the Holy Spirit,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.

Mary, Mother of Health and Hope,
Pray for us.

Amen.



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God calls to us constantly, longing to guide those who yearn for life and desire to see good days into the way of peace.

The Rule of Saint Benedict helps us to hear God's voice, in the Holy Scriptures, in the sacred liturgy and in our brothers in community. If you are a single man longing to live your Catholic faith in a way which brings great joy as it demands the best of you, consider whether God is calling you to be a Benedictine monk at Buckfast Abbey.

Please reach out to us, and we will do all we can to help you.

OLSM Primary to become a Referral Agency for Foodbank



Our Lady and Saint Michael's Primary School in Abergavenny is set to become a referral agency for the Abergavenny Foodbank.

The school frequently sends collections of food donated by the local school community to the Abergavenny foodbank, but after discussions with volunteers at the foodbank the school Head teacher; Mr Viv Evans will attend training to allow the school the ability to support those in need with accessing Foodbank resources.

The training will enable the school to issue vouchers to people in crisis within its community, who would then be able to come straight to the foodbank to receive a 3 day emergency food parcel.

'Schools are increasingly becoming a conduit for identifying initial needs in the communities we serve,' said Mr Evans. 'This seemed a logical next step to allow our school to further support those who need some support.'

Vatican takes precautions against virus

The Vatican is conducting tests for coronavirus on the dozens of priests who live in the same residence as Pope Francis and making contingency plans to move those diagnosed with the disease elsewhere.

The moves come several days after a priest who lives in the Santa Marta residence and works in the Secretariat of State tested positive for the virus and was hospitalized in Italy.

The Vatican source was one of several officials who expressed concern about a possible flare-up in the residence where the pope has lived since his election in 2013.

The modern residence, which has 130 rooms and suites and a staff of about 30 people, is also home to dozens of priests who continue to work in key Vatican departments.

While the Vatican has enacted procedures to stem the spread of coronavirus inside the city-state, some officials say they may not be sufficient and think a total shutdown may be needed.

Until recently, the Holy Father took his meals in the common dining room but he has recently been eating in his suite, one official said.

Pope Francis is 83 and part of one of his lungs was removed following an illness when he was a young man.

Since March 6, the Vatican has issued at least five notices or decrees that mirror steps

taken in Italy, the hardest hit country in Europe, with more than 8,000 deaths as of Thursday.

They include recommendations to communicate by phone even with people in the same office, alternating shifts and encouraging as much work from home as possible.



Pope Francis pictured on a Palm Sunday audience. But in the current pandemic crisis he gives his audiences via TV from inside the Vatican

Diocesan priests visit the Holy Land

**By Father David Hayman
Director of Ongoing Formation of the Clergy**

It's never too late to deepen our relationship with Jesus!

This was the reaction of six of our priests who went on a recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Although in the Latin Church our celebration of the Christmas season had concluded, we were in Bethlehem for the celebration of the Armenian Orthodox Christmas celebrated by their Patriarch, and so we enjoyed extended festivities this year!

In spite of the historical and current political complexities that exist in the area we received a very warm welcome and wonderful hospitality wherever we went from Tiberias, Nazareth and Capernaum in Galilee, in the West Bank, to Bethany, Bethlehem and Jerusalem in Judaea, from the Israeli and Palestinian communities alike.

The experience of knowing that one was walking on occasions in the very footsteps of Jesus himself was one which brings the Scriptures alive, for example in the synagogue at Capernaum, or at the steps on which the Lord would have walked after the Last Supper on his way to the Garden of Gethsemane, or on his way to the House of Caiaphas to be interrogated by the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, or in his way to be condemned by Pilate. But probably the most profound experience was walking the Via Dolorosa; one might be frustrated by the vendors you encounter as you try to pray the Stations of the Cross, but then the realisation hits you that this is probably very similar to how it was when the Lord carried his cross the same way on his way to Calvary, all for his maximum humiliation and embarrassment in the eyes of those in

Jerusalem at that time.

All of us have returned with a sense of having encountered the Lord in a life-enriching way, and with a passion for bringing the scriptures alive in our various ministries.

Another of our abiding memories will be the deep appreciation of the Christian communities in the Holy

Land for the prayerful support they experience from all who come on pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

As priests of the Archdiocese of Cardiff, we not only assure you that we have prayed for your intentions in the Masses in Tiberias and Bethlehem, but also encourage you to consider joining a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.



Charity works to support young people at risk

By Joanne White

We need to talk about suicide ...

Why? Because it is on the increase for young people and is the biggest killer of young people under 35 in the UK, according to the charity Papyrus.

The Family Life Commission, along with the Ongoing Formation of Clergy team, were blessed to welcome Lauren Carvalho, to our Archdiocese in early February. Lauren came as a mother, and now a trained counsellor, to share with us, both clergy and lay people, her family's experience of losing her 19-year-old son by suicide eight years ago, and how she has gone on to work with and support others also bereaved by suicide.

Both days started with Lauren showing a personal video which, as one participant said, '...was a hard watch, as a parent; very moving and so sad but necessary.'

Faces of grief

In sharing her story, Lauren reflected honestly and generously on how suicide has affected her family, the different faces of grief, what helped and what didn't help. She was 'passionately driven but at the same time open and receptive to different perspectives' as another participant observed.

She offered ways to support families after the loss of someone to suicide and the role of Parish Bereavement groups in offering this support. The Commission was also able to share information regarding bereavement support provided by SoBS, Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide; this support includes local self-help groups which meet, by invitation, on a monthly basis. <https://uksobs.org/>

Both Lauren and David Heald, of Papyrus Cardiff, spoke about suicide prevention and how it is everyone's responsibility: how to intervene when someone is feeling suicidal, set up a safety contract with them and point the way to support agencies.

Everyone was deeply moved and challenged by Papyrus' short campaign videos which were shown: the 'Bedtime stories' clip is a must for all parents/carers of children in facing

the reality of the negative impact social media can have on our children's mental wellbeing and showing the need to be aware of what our children are potentially being exposed to (this can be found on the Papyrus website or YouTube). <https://papyrus-uk.org/bedtime-stories/>

Suicide is not specific to any one type of person, gender or profession, a fact highlighted during the clergy day when it was noted that there have been three deaths by suicide amongst our diocesan clergy in the past 20 years. Some have lost friends in seminary by suicide not to mention parishioners they have lost by suicide. Suicide does not discriminate and we are all at risk. However, there are some who are more at risk: those who have themselves been bereaved by suicide being at the greatest risk.

Myths around suicide

The collective clergy, priests and deacons alike, spoke passionately about their wish to dispel myths around suicide; suicide is not a sin. Suicide does not mean eternal damnation.

They shared an overwhelming desire to affirm self-love amongst our communities; we, as children of God, are loved by Him unconditionally and He wants us to embrace this, to accept ourselves the way he made us, in our imperfect form of Himself, and love ourselves.

There was much discussion about the need to spread the message that making mistakes is part of our human nature; it does not make us failures. Success should not be measured by academic achievements, wealth, material worth or pay grade; love should be our sole desire and we should embrace the love we share whilst remembering we are loved above all other forms of love by God our merciful Father! We need to stop applying unnecessary pressure upon ourselves and those around us.

On the Saturday, we reflected on how as parents, we are being influenced by secularism: how often do we reward results achieved over effort put in by our children; why do the academic achievements of a school influence our choice of school rather than the wellbeing of



Our clergy spoke passionately about the myths around suicide

its pupils?

Should teachers be awarded pay increases based on the academic results of their pupils rather than the dedication, care and support they show to their pupils?

Support for those possible victims

Since our events and whilst writing this article, I have heard of further deaths by suicide including that of the celebrity Caroline Flack; and our local undertaker oversaw three funerals in one week for people who had died by suicide, in the Chepstow area alone.

So, what can we do? We can all talk to someone about these issues and so spread awareness: talking about suicide is not going to increase its occurrence, but it might just save someone's life. We can help promote and financially support charities such as Papyrus, The Samaritans and others who offer support to those considering suicide. We can, as someone who attended our event noted, 'be more aware of what to be looking out for with family, friends and neighbours.....so that through our love, attentiveness and presence (we) could not stop them from dying (by suicide)'

If you or someone you know maybe having suicidal thoughts please contact the Hopeline 0800 068 41 41

For bereavement support following suicide please contact 0300 111 5065

Need to support our charities

Bishop Terence Drainey, Chair of the Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) has made a public statement urging Catholics to keep the poor, vulnerable and isolated members of our community at the forefront of our minds at this difficult time.

There is an urgent need to support Catholic charities and the people they serve during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 outbreak is putting our Catholic charities under great strain because of increased demand and increased costs together with adverse effects on their volunteer base. There will also be a certain loss of income from parish collections.

Cardinal's message on COVID-19

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has sent us a message after the Prime Minister's historic announcement on 23 March) strengthening restrictions in an attempt to combat the spread of COVID-19.

The Cardinal stresses that we must all play our part to safeguard the NHS and to save 'precious lives'.

"We're going to play our full part in it. That was the call of St. Paul that we ought to be good citizens and today we ought to be good citizens playing our part in the protection of the vulnerable, in our support for the NHS and in the preserving of human life, which is so precious to God in the face of this virus."

Cardinal Nichols also points to the Sunday just gone to demonstrate the strength of the Catholic community's response and its commitment to keeping prayer and worship at the heart of a new pattern of life:

"We're beginning to reflect on the experience of the streaming of the celebration of Mass on Sunday and on week days. There are many, many encouraging signs. I've heard of congregations being 10 times the normal size. I've heard of families preparing together at home. Families having their own little children's liturgy during the reading of the Word..."

"...So we have to deepen our prayer. We have to use the Internet, and all the other things that we have, to encourage one another."



Members of the Family Life Commission who attended the suicide prevention workshop



A damaging decision for Catholic schools

The Welsh Government is making changes to the curriculum, and it could spell disaster for Catholic schools

By Paul Barber, Director of the Catholic Education Service

It has gone largely unreported in the press, but the Welsh Government is making wholesale changes to the way schools teach certain subjects. Some of these changes, if implemented, could have a damaging impact on Catholic schools and put the future of Catholic education in Wales at risk.

One of the most troubling proposals is their plan to change Religious Education (RE) to Religion, Values and Ethics. On the face of it, a name-change may not sound that big a concern, but it would be surprising if such a mover were not accompanied by a change in what the government considers to be the content of the subject. Any attempt to impose that on Catholic schools could be disastrous for what the Church considers to be the most important subject on the curriculum.

Worryingly, Catholic schools are not immune from these proposals as Education is devolved in Wales meaning that the Welsh Government has legislative control over schools, the curriculum as well as other areas including inspection.

Religious Education is at the core of the core curriculum in Catholic schools, and at both primary and secondary levels (including post GCSE), at least 10% of school time is dedicated to this subject. Academically rigorous, it is a school-level version of what most would recognise as the university subject of theology.

In-depth study of scripture

Being grounded in the 2000-year-old theological tradition of the Catholic Church, RE in Catholic schools gives pupils the opportunity to delve into the motivations behind faith, the ability to critically approach the 'big questions' of life and the skills needed to analyse the various 'truth claims' made by religion. It involves an in-depth study of scripture, Church texts, and the work of some of history's most prominent philosophers and theologians from St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas to St John Henry

Newman. This approach creates religiously literate pupils who can understand the language of religion and critically engage with their own faith and that of others.

In other schools (that is to say non-Catholic schools), RE can look very different, with many taking a more sociological approach to faith and belief. These approaches tend to observe the practices of different religions from without, rather than engaging with the theological motivations within. This can result in the approach that religion is something that 'those people over there' do, with the student as an external observer, rather than a potential participant, engaging in the theological debate. It is therefore unsurprising that those who subscribe to this secular approach to RE want to lump 'values and ethics' in with religion, as they believe faith to be just another 'worldview'.

This approach may be appropriate in some schools, but is contrary to the Catholic approach, where instilling values, virtues and ethics are the job of the entire school community, supported by a rigorous RE curriculum. To this extent, exam boards recognise the difference in these approaches by offering a specific Catholic RE GCSE which pupils in Catholic schools sit.

Strips parents of their right to choose

Moreover, not only would this change represent a dumbing down of the subject, it also overloads stretched RE departments in many schools, where the time dedicated to RE has already fallen to minimal levels. In these schools, the merging of subjects into 'areas of learning and experience' (which the Welsh Government are also proposing to do) risk RE becoming lost as just another 'humanity'. If imposed on all schools, this approach would also effectively strip parents of their right to choose a school in accordance with their convictions, and remove the rationale for the existence of Catholic schools. There are, as ever, those who would fervently wish this to be the case.

The other potentially damaging proposal is the usurpation of parents' rights as the primary educators of their children, by removing parents' right to withdraw their children from RE as well as Relationship and Sex Education (RSE).

Not only do these rights respect parents' inalienable

role in their child's education and formation, especially when it comes to dealing with sensitive topics such as these. They have also proved a useful tool in ensuring that schools communicate and engage with parents on key aspects of the curriculum. Our belief in parental primacy means that Catholic schools will always engage with parents over the delivery of RSE, successfully resulting in no pupils being withdrawn from RSE in Welsh Catholic schools last year. But we believe this 'conscience clause' is important in other schools, too. Catholic provision in Wales is much smaller than it is in England and for many Welsh Catholics it is simply not possible to send their child to a Catholic school. Many parents of other faiths will also face a similar problem.

The rights of Catholic parents

Hence, while we can be confident that RE and RSE can be delivered in accordance with Church teachings and parents' wishes in Catholic schools, the same cannot be said for all schools. Therefore, it is essential that Catholic parents maintain the right to withdraw so that all schools must respect and engage with their pupils' primary educators. This will enable a partnership to be forged to deliver these subjects in a way which takes into account parental concerns.

What can be done to stop these changes? The Catholic Education Service has been working hard trying to explain to the Welsh Government how these proposals will negatively impact on our schools, but their ears seem to be closed to our concerns. Therefore, as we await legislation to appear before the Welsh Assembly, we need to show the Welsh Government the strength of feeling amongst the Catholic community against these proposals. To date, over 1300 letters have been sent to Welsh Assembly Members (AM) but the more letters we send, the better chance we will have at stopping these changes. Therefore, I urge readers in Wales to visit the Catholic Education Service's website (catholiceducation.org.uk) and use our handy letter generator to contact AMs. It only takes a few clicks and a couple of minutes, but it could make all the difference to Welsh Catholic schools.

A faith pilgrimage to Pembrokeshire Islands

We gathered at various intervals during Friday afternoon and evening in the lovely - but on this occasion very wet - coastal town of Tenby. There were twelve of us in total; Wendy and Gill from Victoria, Alona from Florida, John from Hampshire...

Where to hold evening prayer and where to eat? These two imponderables were uppermost in our thoughts as the dry weather option - eating al fresco in the pretty harbour followed by evening prayer on the beach - slipped further and further from our grasp. We considered a Church hall, even a sea cave, but at length settled on some nice fish and chips from an award-winning Fish and Chip shop and evening prayer in the quiet of the hotel lounge.

Dawn broke and with it came glorious sunshine! Through the open front door of the hotel our holiday island beckoned enticingly. Islands have a particular lure and Caldey is no exception. A mile out from Tenby, the island has been home to one monastic community or another for centuries.

Sabbath observed on Caldey

The afternoon boat couldn't come soon enough and we were all waiting on the beach ready to walk along the narrow make-shift jetty, the moment it came into view.

Brother Titus from the islands' Monastery and Angela from St Philomena's Guest House, met the group on the quayside. Some of our party were to stay at the Monastery, the remainder at the Guesthouse.

Settled into our various accommodations there was time before the evening meal to visit the few shops clustered around the village green. A scene made all the more captivating and timeless by the presence of the white-walled, red-roofed monastery just beyond the little post office - enchanting.

The Sabbath is observed on Caldey and so with no day trippers allowed and the shops closed this day; the island felt different, perhaps more spiritual, more pastoral.

We met the Prior of Caldey, Fr Gildas, in the monastery lounge for a humorous and informative 'scene setting' hour. Later in the afternoon, in warm sunshine, Fr Gildas, decked in an old wide brimmed straw hat that fitted the rural landscape so well and with the eye of a Celtic scholar, took us on a guided tour of the places of interest close to the monastery; St

David's Church, St Illtyds, the old mill and an ancient cottage. Afterwards with Fr Gildas having returned to the monastery, we explored further afield; the lighthouse with seascapes reaching all the way to Lundy Island, a stone watchtower now converted into a hidden Chapel (magnificent in its simplicity) and in a nearby clearing with the sea as backdrop, a wooden crucifix, probably life size... so emotive - when I survey the wondrous cross...

Compline with the monks

The day closed, as it had the previous evening and would the following, with Compline, a service of night praise with the monks in the Abbey Church.

Tuesday morning and it was time to say farewell to our island home and return to the mainland and the second leg of our pilgrim journey; this time to St Davids in the beautiful and sometimes windswept far west.

Driving with the sun high over the sea to our left, the weather was once again warm and the traffic light.

St Non's Retreat, a large 1930's house with terraced lawns and Chapel in the grounds, stands lonely but welcoming on the cliff tops at the end of a single-track road. Out to sea the view was of islands; Skomer to the south, Ramsey to the west, and out further than either and again to the west, Grassholm.

With the sun quietly climbing into a perfectly blue sky we gathered on our first full day at St Non's for Morning Prayer in the ruins of St Non's Chapel, just over the wall from the Retreat.

It was on this spot in about the year 500, as a violent storm raged all around that St Non - miraculously shielded from the wind and rain - gave birth to David, later to become St David, patron saint of Wales. What a place to stand and touch the



Pilgrimage leader David Gleed

spiritual...

Today's walk took us out along the rugged coast path to St Justinian's some seven miles distant - a fabulous walk dotted with pretty bays including Porthclais where the river Alun meets the sea. It was on the banks of the Alun that David built his Celtic monastery, roughly on the spot of the present St Davids Cathedral.

After lunch, perched (but safely perched!) on a grassy slope and with quite a drop to the sea below, we followed the path as it turned a corner bringing into full view the Sound of Ramsey and the island of tomorrow's adventure.

A Holy place

From the Lifeboat shoot at St Justinian's we stepped into the twenty-four-seat motor launch that would take us to Ramsey Island. Only a short distance, the crossing to the island must non-the-less, never be taken lightly. The waters here can be dangerous with jagged rocks and a whirlpool racing around (usually) submerged, Horse Rock.

A bird sanctuary sensitively accommodating of both humans and bird life, Ramsey Island has been in the care of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) since 1992.

Without the Churches and Crosses of Caldey Island, Ramsey may at first appear to be less spiritual in atmosphere, but not so... just stand a

moment; let the breeze gently brush past you; notice the sheep grazing by the dry-stone wall; the sea, moving, shining, living...

Perhaps none of this should be surprising, however. Holy folk have been coming to Ramsey Island since at least the third century when a small hermitage was built, most probably on a site just up from the landing stage, not far from the farmhouse, now home to the island's two full-time wardens.

The weather was glorious and after walking around the island we sat on the grass in front the farmhouse drinking tea and enjoying our sandwiches, while below, in Ramsey Sound, pleasure boats and porpoises rode the running swell - and was that a dolphin!?

About our legs the mischievous Ramsey Chickens hovered, waiting for the moment a dropped crust or corner of cake would fall to the ground... It reminded me of an earlier visit to the island. Then Emily and Lucy my step-daughters and Katy, my youngest had been entertained just as we were now, by the daring spirit of these loveable characters. On that occasion, a sheepdog had also been 'on the bill', but today in the warm sunshine he was nowhere to be seen...

I laid back on the soft grass and closed my eyes, this was Journeying...

David Gleed

<https://www.journeying.co.uk>



The monastery at Caldey Island

Wanted for the Missions

Large Statues (Even damaged ones), old vestments, pictures, church fittings, rosaries, prayer books, religious books, relics etc.

**Please ring
Mr. B. Ferris KSC,
102 Moor St, Earlsdon,
Coventry CV5 6EY
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