

Pastoral Letter 2

Dear Friends

The spirituality of the great Christian St Ignatius of Loyola is summed up in the phrase 'Finding God in All Things'. If this is true where is God in the current crisis? Has faith anything to say to us in our present situation? Well, having come thus far, it won't surprise you to know that I think it does. To understand why, I invite you to turn to John's Gospel where Jesus heals a man born blind.

Remember this is John's Gospel - very different from the other three, so it is about much more than one blind man having his sight restored. It's about blindness in a much deeper sense. It is about the blindness of humanity and a Jesus who came among us to heal our blindness and open our eyes to the truth in all its fullness. Christians believe that Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness of human foolishness and ignorance, the light which, as John says in the prologue to his Gospel, the darkness cannot overcome. And so the question I invite you to reflect upon today is this: what truths is the current crisis inviting us to see? What is it telling us about ourselves and the world in which we live? May I suggest two things here.

First of all our present situation invites us to ponder that we live in one world. We are all human beings and if we are to have a healthy future on this planet, then, it will be by doing things together. The virus is showing us in its own way that borders between nations do not exist; that underneath our skin we are all the same; that we suffer the same illnesses. If we can grasp this when the crisis is over, it will have taught us something of immense importance about ourselves, the world and God.

The other thing I invite you to consider is what the media keep telling us - that this situation is going to change the way we live forever. And who can deny that some kind of change is needed. The world cannot go on the way it has been and this disturbing situation is inviting, even forcing us, to see this. As we are currently travelling and flying less, the air quality is already much better in our locality. Paradoxically, as we self-isolate and learn to social distance, our concern for each other

is growing as groups from all over the country help the elderly, the house-bound and other vulnerable people. In our community we are discovering new ways to be school, not least through technological innovation.

Some of you may have seen an article flying around social media. I want to share it with you in the context of this message:

And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently.

And the people healed. And with the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.

Could this be a glimpse of a new future?

With my prayers and blessing

Fr Andrew Hutchinson

A number of you have asked me for prayers to say together as a family at this time. I share these for use at dinner each night:

Agapé Prayers for Meals

All gather at the dining table

As candles are lit a member of the household says this prayer

O God, grant us your love, which never fails, let it burn in us and shed its light on those around us, and by its brightness may we see your Kingdom, and the true and never-failing Light, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Member of the household reads the Prophecy of Isaiah

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death for ever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain.

(Isaiah 25:6-10)

Using a bell or some other sound, time one minute of silence after the reading

A member of the household asks people to share a word or phrase from the reading

Everyone has the opportunity to share a word or phrase

A member of the family leads the Psalm

Psalm 24

God owns this planet and all its riches.* The earth and every creature belong to God. God set the land on top of the seas* and anchored it in the deep. Who is fit to climb God's mountain* and stand in his holy place? Whoever has integrity:* not chasing shadows, not living lies. God will bless them, their savior will bring justice.* They long to see the Lord, they seek the face of Jacob's God. Stretch toward heaven, you gates, open high and wide.* Let the glorious sovereign enter. Who is this splendid ruler?* The Lord of power and might, the conqueror of chaos. Stretch toward heaven, you gates,* open high and wide. Let the glorious sovereign enter. Who is this splendid ruler? The Lord of heaven's might,* this splendid ruler is the Lord our God.

Then, these blessings are recited by members of the family

Over wine or other beverages

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe. You create the fruit of the vine; and refresh us with the cup of salvation in the Blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Glory to you for ever and ever. Amen.

Over bread

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe. You bring forth bread from the earth; and you have given us the bread of life in the Body of your Son Jesus Christ. As grain scattered upon the earth is gathered into one loaf, so gather your Church in every place into the kingdom of your Son. To you be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

Over the rest of the food

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe. You have blessed the earth to bring forth food to satisfy our hunger. Let this food strengthen us, that following our Saviour in the way of the cross, we may come to the joy of his resurrection. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, now and forever. Amen.

During the meal, share a conversation about the highs and lows of the day

At the meal's conclusion, a member of the family offers the dismissal

One Voice Let us bless the Lord

Many Voices Thanks be to God