

**The Rectory  
Rectory Close  
Radyr CF15 8EW  
vicki.burrows@me.com  
Tel 029 20842417 or 07515 965781**

Dear Friends,

The heir to the throne, the Prime Minister, the Health Secretary and our Chief Medical Officer are all ill. Infections in Great Britain are doubling every three days. Yesterday one son, a hospital doctor, who like me has an underlying respiratory issue, was told by his consultant to remain in total isolation. Then, hours later, my GP and June our Bishop instructed me to remain indoors apart from exercise in seclusion. We are facing our own vulnerability and mortality as never before. Some years ago when I had weeks on end in hospital I wrote both my own funeral service and my will - it was a cathartic experience forced upon me by the recognition that I am not and never will be invincible.



Moments ago, another son and his fiancé shared with me their life on the front line in the Heath – “impress upon your parishioners”, they both said, “that if you are over 70 or you are vulnerable you must stay at home. End of”. Those on the front line know, and want you to know, that by leaving your home against these new guidelines you are not just putting your own life at risk but selfishly risking that of other people too. So, beloved in Christ, be it your care and delight, in this season of Lent to take up the cross and stay home for the well-being of yourself and others. I cannot emphasise this enough because having had the pleasure of chatting to so many of you by phone and email this week, I’m only too aware that we are not all adhering to our Government’s advice. Remember, Jesus was hated for saying it as it is.

*On the fifth Sunday of Lent, 29<sup>th</sup> March, Passiontide begins and we move ever closer in our hearts and minds to the final days of Jesus’ life. As I looked at the readings (Exekiel 37.1-14, Romans 8.6-11 and John 11.1-45) I am reminded that, once upon a time, St Francis got up to preach saying, “God has not given me anything to say to you” and with those words he offered a blessing to the people and sat down. Sometimes less is more....but whilst I followed in his footsteps on the YouTube video I offer you some thoughts to fill your quiet moments locked down at home. Paul’s letter to the early church in Rome throws light on the valley of dry bones and the raising of Lazarus. Paul says it as it is. A life lived for self is no life at all. Life is our purpose and our meaning and that eternal life that we all seek is a life that mirrors and exudes God’s creativity and love. The story of Lazarus speaks of God’s power over death...the power to raise us, to give us another chance, to use what time we have left for God’s glory. Death was costly even for God incarnate. To give to other’s involves denying oneself or dying to self. To stay here at home deprives me of much pleasure but it may bring life to others. Jesus does not rush to Lazarus his friend – his reaction is careful and considered but he makes his purpose clear to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life, those who believe in me even though they die will live.....” Perhaps even today he speaks into this 21<sup>st</sup> century pandemic - those who give themselves unselfishly to others bring life and light into our darkness. In Jesus, we see the heart of God...a heart that is breaking and will be broken. He weeps at the grave of his friend. His tears flow for a life cut short. He is human, mourning and as vulnerable as we are. It is this love for a friend that proves to be the turning point in John’s gospel for, in his reaching out to the dead and his love for the unlovable, he guarantees his own suffering and crucifixion. Yet from this place of risky love with the hindsight of an empty tomb Paul reminds us that, to set our own hearts on our own needs as though they could bring us life, is in fact to bring us death. In His Christ, God shows us all who we are meant to be...daughters and sons made in God’s image. The story of Lazarus is ironically a little taste of heaven, of all that will be offered on Easter Day. Here in the Lazarus story is an invitation and reminder that we are all held in God’s life and love - Christ Jesus sets the seal on his own death by walking towards the hostility of the religious. As he speaks to dead Lazarus, he also speaks to us who choose death over life by saying, “unbind him and let him go”. We can only find life, God’s life in us, by allowing ourselves to choose life for others. This is not an easy message - there is no sugar coating....but I do believe it is true.*

...and finally beloved, may I thank you all for your many messages, emails and calls it has been so good to hear from you. Please keep in touch. Thank you for the many people who have shared insights or offered to help others. Your generosity is making a huge difference. I am delighted to share with you that I have a long list of individuals who have offered to collect your shopping or prescription, or run an errand, so please, if you need anything, do contact me as I can put you in touch with another person who will be delighted to help safely without face to face contact. Please do not be afraid to ask for here in your many acts of kindness and connection I see light shining in the darkness.

Wishing you many blessings this week,  
Vicki  
XX

PS for those who are self-isolating some glimpses of Radyr in March 2020 taken as we have walked alone during the week - see if you can work out where we are?

