

The Rectory  
Rectory Close  
Radyr CF15 8EW  
[vicki.burrows@me.com](mailto:vicki.burrows@me.com)  
Tel 029 20842417 or 07515 965781

Dear Friends,

***Eucharistic lives***  
***On the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)***

One of the delights of this lockdown is having the time to call many of you and have a conversation. You have talked about so many things, missing church, missing community, missing family and friends, the frustrations of isolation and those awful feelings anxiety, loneliness and the loss of freedom. At the same time so many of you have articulated deep thanksgiving for those who care for you, for the blessings of warm weather and sunshine, for the NHS and all those key workers who we might never see or know but who are sustaining us day by day by bringing us daily bread. Of course the Greek word for thanksgiving is "Eucharist" – we have ritualised Eucharist through a meal in the blessing, breaking and sharing of bread and that meal has given meaning to our lives.



As a small child I remember well ritualised meals, particularly the Pesach (Passover) Seder - the meal that celebrates that escape from slavery and oppression to freedom in a promised land. We would gather in my grandma's home to eat the family meal. I remember both the solemnity and the joy but also the length of that meal...it seemed to go on forever. There would be a full meal to enjoy as well as a plate of ritual foods....lamb (to remind us of the blood of the paschal lamb shed before the children of Israel escaped from Egypt), egg (to remind us of the new life ahead), bitter herbs and salty water (to remind us of the bitterness of oppression) and the four cups of wine or grape juice (to celebrate freedom). We would eat matzah (flat unleavened bread) to remind us that there was no time for the dough to rise on the night the slaves hurriedly gathered up their kneading bowls and ran for their lives. The meal seemed to go on forever as the bread was broken, but not eaten until we had prayed and drank and sung and given a piece to each other and listened to the story of our people unfold ...sometimes the story was told by a child. When it finally came to eating the matzah it was like manna, bread from heaven.

As we have talked in recent days, one of the things many of us are missing is family meals and the opportunity to sit at table with those we love. There is nothing more enjoyable than sharing a meal with friends and family. When one person takes bread and shares a loaf it is not just eating, it is communion, it is Eucharist even. When you have something and you share it with me I grow and flourish – because of your gift and I am thankful. The bread we share with one another cannot be just a little white wafer but also it's a hug or a warm embrace. The loaf we share does not always contain flour but can be words of kindness or a story told. Bread may even be the money you give to another in need. Bread is blessed when it is broken and given to others. Breaking and sharing bread is like the chain letter we began in school long ago, once started its unstoppable. Within a few hundred years the whole world had heard the gospel stories of Jesus. Those first Christians could not keep it just for themselves.

Sometimes when our hearts are breaking and our lives turn inwards with grief, anxiety and perhaps depression we need our daily bread more than ever. I suspect most who read this letter will know of someone who is or has been sick with Covid-19 or someone who has died recently. On Wednesday I heard heartbreaking news from my last parish - Urvashi Lakhani, a bubbly year 2 teaching assistant much loved by the children has died. She smiles into the camera cuddled up

with her tiny grandchild on her last Facebook post taken only days ago. Urvashi was not a Christian but she blessed me with her welcoming presence and support when I taught Year 2 the meaning of Passover in her classroom. This week I pray for her soul and for her family, friends and colleagues who miss her like crazy.

It's hard not to think about Urvashi and the thousands of others who have died of Covid-19 this week. Like the disciples walking together on the road to Emmaus we too feel bereft. The presence of Jesus brought meaning to the lives of his friends and now their lives are forever changed. They had seen a reality in which forgiveness, healing and love were not just words but a kind of bread broken and shared in their lives. People said nothing good would ever come out of Nazareth but one man changed that and released his friends to see a world where opportunity and hope and justice can reign. His body had been light in their mundane lives, yet it had been destroyed by the instruments of violence and hatred. They had lost him and in losing him had lost a part of themselves. Even today the word "loss" is one that summarises our pain...we say we have lost our freedom, we have lost a loved one, we have lost our innocence, our friends and loved ones, our health and independence. Loss is part of life. Sometimes loss is far off and at other times it comes close and turns our lives upside down. With some of these losses come the loss of hope and dreams. Pain and suffering was bearable when faith seemed possible or life was good. What can we do with our losses? Hold them close and turn inwards with grief or share them with other travellers on this journey of life? We could blame others or blame ourselves, we could feel anger or hatred or we could shed tears and allow ourselves to grieve with others and in so doing hear a strange and shocking yet gentle voice saying "blessed are those who mourn". The news is unexpected. The voice doesn't say "blessed are those who are successful, rich or powerful". And the voice doesn't say "blessed are those who offer comfort" but the voice of Jesus says, "blessed are those who mourn". Why? Because, somehow in the midst of mourning, the first step of the dance to new life begin...for the cries that well up are cries of gratitude.

You and I come to that place we call Eucharist (or thanksgiving) with hearts broken by loss. Just like the two disciples we may come to the table burdened by grief but it is here our journey begins....and the question is, "will our loss lead us to emptiness, resentment, anger or deep gratitude?"

When the disciples walking to Emmaus spoke of their loss, they also spoke of their hope. Read the gospel story. In the breaking of bread we find our hope. We, like the first friends of Jesus, may only see or sense it momentarily. At the altar rail and at the dining table, in the kitchen or in the school dining hall, with friends and total strangers we maybe united as a family through the simple act of breaking bread and sharing a meal together. When bread, whatever kind of bread, is broken then Christ is made known and comes to mend our broken hearts and broken lives. Then we can say, even in the midst of grief, the Lord has risen and is among us.

Wishing you joy even in the midst of our sadness this Eastertide,

Yours in Christ,

Vicki  
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(Here are a few pictures of your gardens this Eastertide. Do look at them all on [our website.](#))

