

DAY FIFTEEN – IT IS A TIME NOW...

SETTING: in your prayer space, place a photo, drawing or craft model of a boat.

Prayer for a new beginning:

God, ever faithful.
You know the aching in our hearts
as we live through this worrying time.
It's like the stuffing has been knocked out
of the whole world.
Isolated from one another we crave for
a new day and another chance
to honour your gift of community.
In your faithfulness heal our brokenness.
Bring us back together, for we now know,
as you have always known:
It is not good that the man should be alone.
[Genesis 2:18]

In a special liturgy on Friday 27 March, from a very empty St Peter's Square in Rome, Pope Francis spoke of the "deafening silence" and "distressing void" that had engulfed the world from the impact of Covid-19. He said we had all been caught off guard and were "fragile and disorientated".

He was speaking out of the gospel text of Luke 8:22-25 – Jesus calms a storm - highlighting the disciples' fear, their concern that Jesus didn't seem to care, and, ultimately, the power of Jesus that causes both fear and amazement.

Read this passage: **Luke 8:22-25**. Spend 5-10 minutes in meditation. How might this passage speak to your own experience / reaction concerning the present lockdown?

Pope Francis puts the focus on "togetherness" – how the virus, in forcing us to be apart, is teaching us the indispensable need for community for a true and fully healthy life. Using the gospel image, he points out that **we are all on the same boat** and are **called to row together, to comfort one another**.

"The storm exposes us to our vulnerability and lays bare all our pre-packaged ideas." We have allowed ourselves to be too caught up in things. Living such frenetic lives, rushing through our days, we have been "lured away by our

haste.” – forgotten one another, over-emphasising independence, losing sight of our connectedness.

Our behaviour and attitude to life has also led to our neglect and abuse of the world itself - “Our gravely ailing planet.” “We carried on regardless, thinking we would stay healthy in a world that was sick.”

Play some reflective music as you consider how Pope Francis’ words apply to you, your lifestyle, and your attitude to life, other people, the earth beneath your feet.

LIKE A KORU

I am a listener
hearing
the split of silence
at Huka falls

I am a singer
making music
on the wind
in the tussocks

I am a woman
awaiting
the rise of yeast
and the sound of bread growing

I am a traveller
opening
like a koru
my ear

[Anne Powell]

A well known chapter in the Hebrew scriptures is **ECCLESIASTES 3** - *For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven...* Read this chapter, or listen to the song version, *Turn, Turn, Turn*, first written by American songwriter, Pete Seeger early 1960s. *Google* for Judy Collins (1966) and The Byrds (1969).

In our present situation, locked down and apart, you may like to reflect on the season upon us. Maybe a new time is calling out -

IT IS A TIME NOW –

a time to be kind
a time to care
a time for rowing together
a time to share
a time for bearing one another's burdens
 to lighten the load we place on ourselves
a time to remove impassable hurdles
a time to give to more than myself
a time to understand
 what it's like living alone
 to have no one to talk with
 or even to phone

IT IS A TIME NOW –

a time to be generous in thought, word and deed
a time to acknowledge there are others in need
a time to let go of our gripes and our moans
 we're in this together though for now we stay home
a time to give thanks for the love that we feel
 its been there all along but now it's so real
a time to forgive what has hurt for so long
a time to agree we all yearn to belong
 there's only one family to keep us sheltered and dry
 and just one boat between us named
 earth sea and sky

DAY SIXTEEN – NEW LIFE, NEW HOPE

SETTING:

Prayer of praise:

Alleluia!
A word that has been, like us,
in lockdown! It's out again as Lent retreats
and bursting with life.
We give you thanks and praise, O God.
Alleluia! He is risen!
Death, though it separates us from those
we love, cannot destroy love
or separate us forever.
The resurrection of Jesus is our victory
and our hope.
We give you thanks and praise, O God.
Alleluia!

Jesus' closest companions, the ones he'd handpicked for ministry, did not believe Mary Magdalene when she ran to them with the news that Jesus was alive. Coming to the tomb in the early morning she found the stone rolled away and no sign of the body. She confronted a person she thought to be the gardener, enquiring, *Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him.* The "Gardener" spoke her name and she immediately knew it was Jesus.

Scripture Reading – John 20:11-18

Spend some time with this passage. Hold it in the context of your "bubble experience", your time of isolation. How has life changed for you? Do you feel your life diminished in any way? Do you ask, *Where is Jesus in all that is happening at the moment?* He's where you least expect to find him.

The first witness of the resurrection was judged hysterical, out of her mind with grief. This scepticism continued among the disciples and is still met today in those who have no knowledge of Jesus, have not develop any personal relationship with him, or cannot accept what seems to be impossible – that a dead person should come back to life.

Resurrection is a very difficult concept, yet it is the heart of the Christian message. The Cross is the primary Christian symbol not because it celebrates death, but because it is recognised as a tree of life – a pathway to an existence without pain or suffering. Its starkness announces freedom and hope. Just as the empty tomb causes the mind to ponder deeply the mystery of life, the Cross demands an exploration of the meaning of suffering.

Further Scripture on the Easter experience:

John 20:1-9

Matthew 28:8-15 Luke 24:13-35

John 21:1-14

WITNESS IN SUFFERING

Breaking bread and pouring wine
Stooping low and washing feet
My Saviour, Friend and Brother
 You feed my need
 For company and to be
 Wanted for myself.

 Weeping in a garden
 Tortured
 By the fear of tomorrow
With no one to watch with you.
Remove the selfishness that keeps me
 From being there for others.

 Dying on a cross
 Forgiving
 Those who put you there
And those broken by their panic.
Heal me from my bitterness
 Teach me to forgive.

 Dawn-chilled-silent-grave
 Empty tomb
 And too much to believe
Bring light to my darkness
 Faith to my doubt
 Life to my death.

[John 13: 1-15; Luke 23: 32 – 24: 12]

*Through the cold, quiet nighttime of the grave underground,
The earth concentrated on him with complete longing
Until his sleep could recall the dark from beyond
To enfold memory lost in the requiem of mind.*

*The moon stirs a wave of brightening in the stone.
He rises clothed in the young colours of dawn.*

[John O'Donohue]

INTERCESSION

The theme of **new life, new hope**, invites prayers of thanksgiving – but also prayers for those for whom the lockdown has drained resources, created fear, presented unexpected difficulties...

- Pray for yourself, your loved ones, your neighbours, your town/city/nation
- Pray for the quick development of a cure for Covid-19 and for the scientists engaged in this work
- Pray in thanksgiving for the gift of life – that there might be a new awareness of its value through this troubled time
- Pray for the medical teams, upholding life while risking their own
- Pray for the sick and the dying
- Pray for a lasting appreciation of community and togetherness beyond this pandemic – and perhaps because of it.

Psalm 117

Alleluia!

Give thanks to the Lord for God is good

God's love is everlasting –

My strength, my song, my saviour.

There are shouts of joy and victory
in the tents of the just.

Alleluia!

DAY SEVENTEEN - BREAKING THE FALL

SETTING: with the Cross, a memento or symbol of a time when you were encouraged or helped out of, saved from a difficult situation.

Prayer to begin:

Today, enter this time of prayer with your own words. Speak to God from the feelings in your heart at this moment. Then, clear your mind and listen. Believe strongly that, with this prayer, you are beginning a conversation. Do your best to ensure it is a two-way conversation.

If you are unfamiliar with this type of praying, or find it difficult, take up an earlier prayer from this series of reflections, one that appealed to you, one that perhaps you have already returned to. Use this prayer to draw you into today's time with God.

***The Lord supports all who fall
and raises all who are bowed down.***

[Psalm 145:14]

Those words from Psalm 144 are wonderfully consoling to people of faith – on two levels. First, there's an acceptance on our part that we "fall", make wrong choices, mess things up. Second, we get "bowed down" – stuff happens to us that we can't control; we get hurt, sick, or feel helpless when those we love suffer. On both levels, God is with us, "supporting" and "raising up". At the time you may not realise this and feel that God has left you to it! But if you can step out of your anger or frustration for a while, you will see a sign that tells you you're not alone.

At the moment we are cut off from one another, a sacrifice deemed necessary to prevent the spread of Covid-19. But no one is cut off from God and there are signs flowing from this critical time that, for a person of faith, indicate God's presence. Here are some that speak to me – you may like to add your own:

- Neighbours looking out for one another – when they haven't had contact before; some had not even spoken.
- Medical professionals and paramedics taking enormous risks for the good of others.
- News items and feature articles highlighting the goodness of individuals and communities – bad news less dominant.
- Increased concern for the most vulnerable.

Comfort, support and even free housing offered to stranded tourists “breaks the fall” of people worried and fearful, anxious and powerless, far from family, trying to cope in unfamiliar surroundings.

- Spend some minutes praying for those in need and for those who are helping (who also need support and encouragement) and give thanks for being able to see God’s presence in the world’s current “unprecedented” situation.

The gospels give several instances of Jesus being frustrated and even despairing of his disciples:

- Matthew 15:16 – Jesus is concerned at their lack of insight.
- Matthew 27:46 – Jesus feels abandoned by God.
- Luke 18:31-34 – Jesus spells out the details of his passion, but they do not understand...
- Luke 19:41 – Jesus weeps over Jerusalem.

Choose one of these episodes and stay with it in meditation. Let Jesus speak to you about his own sense of isolation – not being able to “reach” the disciples – feeling alone and abandoned. Tell him of your own concerns during this time of uncertainty. Then, return to the Psalm:

The Lord supports all who fall and raises all who are bowed down. [Psalm 145:14]

and from the same Psalm [vs8-9]

The Lord is good to all The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

Read and pray the whole of Psalm 145. It tells of the greatness and the goodness of God. In a time of difficulty, restricted freedom and concern over the risk of infection, this Psalm can reinforce your faith, strengthen your hope and re-motivate your love. The beautiful **Psalm 8** is encouraging at any time but perhaps especially now:

*Lord our God, the whole world tells the greatness of your name.
Your glory reaches beyond the stars...
What is humankind that you remember them,
The human race that you care for them?
You treat them like gods, dressing them in glory and splendour. [8:2,5-6]*

Some “uplifting” music will help seal this time of prayer and assure you of the goodness and beauty of God, of ourselves and of the world.

The prayer-praise of Mary, uplifted by her visit to Elizabeth, can become your own as you conclude –

And Mary said:

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord
and my spirit exults in God my saviour;
because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid.
Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed,
for the Almighty has done great things for me.
Holy is his name,
and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him.
He has shown the power of his arm,
he has routed the proud of heart.
He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly.
The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away.
He has come to the help of Israel, his servant, mindful of his mercy
according to the promise he made to our ancestors –
of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.*

[Luke 1:46-55]

DAY EIGHTEEN – ONE WORLD, OUR WORLD

SETTING: with the Cross and candle, a globe or world map; perhaps a photo image of the universe highlighting earth.

Beginning prayer:

Creative God,
constantly forming and shaping,
your loving kindness surrounds our planet,
enfolding us with compassion
and filling creation with your life.

Reform us, reshape us, renew us.

Compassionate God,
constantly forming and shaping,
your tender-hearted mercy is poured upon us,
despite our ruthless exploitation and greed.
We repent of our apathy and inaction
as we see the pain of our planet.

Reform us, reshape us, renew us.

Merciful God,
constantly forming and shaping,
your forgiveness is offered to all who repent.
Inspire us to direct our energies
towards peace and harmonious living.

Reform us, reshape us, renew us.

Forgiving God,
constantly forming and shaping,
by your Spirit, give us respect and integrity
in the way we care for our earth, your creation,
help us to follow our Lord and Saviour in living justly.

Reform us, reshape us and renew us, so that the earth
and all creation may sing your praise and glory. Amen.

[Baptist Union of Great Britain]

As our lockdown continues, it is timely to reflect on what this imposed isolation is teaching: about myself, my relations with others – from whom, at this time, I am mostly separated – and about the planet Earth of which I am a part.

Myself, Others, Earth – all are intimately connected. May this time of isolation help everyone to appreciate the value and importance of this interconnection.

Laudato Si – on the care of our common home, was written by Pope Francis in 2015. It is available on-line, but here are some points from the document to assist your reflection during this day of prayer. Spend some time on each point, seeking possible, practical, personal responses:

- ❖ The world is not a problem to be solved, but a **joyful mystery** to be contemplated with gladness and praise. [12]
- ❖ The speed with which human activity has developed contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution. [18]
- ❖ Sadly, there is **widespread indifference** to the suffering of those forced to leave their homes...(pointing) to a loss of a sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded. [25] – **Note:** we are experiencing the opposite – required to stay in our homes, becoming refugees “in reverse”. This sense of “dislocation” can help us appreciate the plight of those without homes.
- ❖ The noise and distraction of an information overload can stop people from learning how to: **live wisely – think deeply – love generously** ...a harmful sense of isolation can result. [47]
- ❖ **God has written a precious book** – whose letters are the multitude of created things present in the universe. [85]
- ❖ A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack **tenderness, compassion** and **concern** for our fellow human beings. [91]

In the light of panic buying and hoarding as we headed into lockdown, it is also timely to consider how each of us might approach the time ahead, when the all-clear is sounded. **How might you, I, we, replace -**

- ✓ ***Consumption with Sacrifice?***
- ✓ ***Greed with Generosity?***
- ✓ ***Wastefulness with a spirit of Sharing?***

A PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH

**All powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.**

You embrace all that exists.

**Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.**

**Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.**

**O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.**

**Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.**

**Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.**

**Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognise that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.**

We thank you for being with us each day.

**Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
For justice, love and peace.**

**Pope Francis
Laudato Si, the Care of our Common Home, 2015**

DAY NINETEEN – LAUGHTER: THE BEST MEDICINE

SETTING: Celebration colours; photos or other mementos that recall happy times, fun and laughter.

PRAYER:

O God, creator of all.
I see you at the birth of time
excited and joyful, thrilled by the splendour and beauty
of what was about to be.
Even before that moment you could not contain your delight,
knowing the gifts you had in store
for the world you already greatly loved.
I think you laughed us into being,
your excitement bubbling over in your eagerness
to give and to give, to love and be loved.
As parents rejoice in their children, you think the world of us.
We are in your continuing care; keep our hearts filled with joy.

Wisdom speaks as creator:

*I was by his side, a master craftsman,
delighting him day after day,
ever at play in his presence,
at play everywhere in his world,
delighting to be with the children of men.*

[Proverbs 8:30-31]

The delight of God is evident in the Genesis story of creation and there is humour in the way the story (two accounts of creation; chapters 1 & 2) unfolds. The variety of life, the abundance of gifts – and, of course, God’s realisation that “the man” would need a partner. It’s hard to have a joke on your own or to achieve anything well! This time of self-isolation is show us how important, indeed vital, is companionship and community.

The expression, “Laughter is the best medicine” is of biblical origin – see **Proverbs 17:22** – so it should be expected that laughter, enjoyment, fun, accompanied Jesus and the disciples on their journeys. Think of the Cana wedding and the laughter and joy that would have filled the occasion, especially with all that extra wine!

Read **John 2:1-10** and place yourself as one of the guests. Enjoy the moment.

There are countless expressions that serve wisdom with humour. Many of our own will likely be ingrained as habits, the wisdom and perhaps even the humour in them quite forgotten. This is a time to recall them, and to ponder them anew.

The Book of Proverbs is rich with expressions that, at first glance, may seem without humour, but try these reasons given by a person too lazy to get out of bed and go out to work: *There's a lion outside!* and *I shall be killed in the street!* [**Proverbs 22:13**] - and there's dry humour a few verses on: *Oppress the poor and you enrich him; give to the rich and you make him poor!* [**vs 16**]. Look for others...

There's a wealth of humour in our everyday speech:

- ✓ *You're as much use as an ashtray on a motorcycle!*
- ✓ *I'm as happy as a tin of worms returning from a fishing trip!*
...you won't have to search far to find others.

Children can come up with some beauties, like the answer a child gave when asked by its parent, trying to instil reverence in church, *Do you know why it's important to be quiet in church and not to fidget? – 'Cause everyone's asleep!*

Wisdom combined with humour can be sensed in this challenging comment: *The earth comes rent free, complete with running water, central heating and air-conditioning. All the landlord asks in return is that we keep it clean!*

Back to the scriptures, and who could not see humour in Balaam's conversation with his donkey in **Numbers 22:21-30**?

Humour reminds us not to take ourselves too seriously. This is not exactly scripture, but G K Chesterton wrote: *Angels can fly because they can take themselves lightly.*

"Laughter is indeed God's therapy. Let us then be thankful that, when the gates of heaven swing open, mixed with the celestial music there is the unmistakable sound of celestial laughter." [Malcolm Muggeridge]

Jesus is the smile of God.

**He came to reveal to us the loving goodness of heavenly Father.
We need God's smile to strip us of our own certainties
and to bring us back to enjoying simplicity and gratuitousness.**

[Pope Francis' Christmas message, 2019]

PRAYER OF THANKS FOR LAUGHTER

Thank you, loving God, for the gift of laughter that

- lifts spirits, lightens heavy hearts
- makes friends, softens sadness
- boosts morale, sharpens minds
- relieves tension, gives enjoyment
- energises, encourages, entertains.

Thank you, creator God, for the laughter within us that

- contributes to health
- cheers the weary
- helps build community
- challenges minds
- is uniquely ours.

Thanks for the laughter, God of wonder and joy.
You have made us in your image, so we know that
laughter is part of your being. Help us to stay
light-hearted In this strange and worrying time
and to honour your gift,
bright and cheerful,
loving, respectful.
Amen.

*Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Serve the Lord with gladness.
Come before him, singing for joy. [Psalm 100:1]*

*So I commend enjoyment, for there is nothing better for people
under the sun than to eat, and drink, and enjoy themselves,
for this will go with them in their toil through the days of life
that God gives them under the sun. [Ecclesiastes 8:15]*

DAY TWENTY – TENDERNESS

SETTING: drape the Cross with a white cloth; flowers/greenery with candle

Prayer:

God, tender and merciful,
my life is often ragged and disorganised
and my temper frays so easily.
This time of isolation, of living so unnaturally,
confined to home most of the time,
is not helping, and puts more strain
on nerves and relationships.
I need your tenderness to flood my life
and your mercy to guide me,
that I might be better able to see
the good in myself
and be calm and loving towards all others.

In April 2017, Pope Francis spoke on the **TED Talk** programme on “The Revolution of Tenderness”. It is easy to find on Google and very worthwhile listening to as part of your prayer.

He uses the **Good Samaritan parable** to illustrate his understanding of how we must be conscious of those hurting, afraid, abandoned, in difficulty, and reach to where they are. **Read: Luke 10:25-37**

TENDERNESS, Pope Francis tells us, is using our eyes to see the other, our ears to hear the other, our hands and our hearts to comfort and to tend the needs of others. “Tenderness is the language of children” and develops through the touch, gaze, voice and love of parents. When you watch parents with their child, notice how they place themselves on the same level as the child, matching their talk, trying to see with their eyes... Pope Francis says that’s precisely what God did – coming to us through Jesus, coming to our level...

TENDERNESS grows when you recognise the other as a “you”, and you as a part of “us”.

- *Can you find examples to illustrate your own understanding of tenderness?*
- *How might you show tenderness today, tomorrow?*
- *How might the present social crisis nurture seeds to grow a “revolution of tenderness”?*

Pope Francis shares an Argentine saying: *Power is like drinking gin on an empty stomach!* It causes dizziness, nausea, a false sense of security; you can lose balance and fall. You end up hurting yourself and others. Tenderness is a virtue of the strong.

Christ says: 'Learn from me; for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls' [Mt 11:29]. If we are constantly upset and impatient with others, we will end up drained and weary. But if we regard the faults and limitations of others with tenderness and meekness, without an air of superiority, we can actually help them and stop wasting our energy on useless complaining. [Pope Francis, Rejoice and Exult, 2018, n.72]

Show affection and concern for the other person. Love surmounts even the worst barriers. If we love someone, or when if we feel loved by them, we can better understand what they are trying to communicate.

[Pope Francis, The Joy of Love, 2016, n.140]

FOR MEDITATION – the tenderness of our God

Hosea 11:1-4

When Israel was a child I loved him
and I called my children out of Egypt.
But the more I called to them, the further they went from me...

I myself taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them in my arms.
Yet they have not understood that I was the one looking after them.
I led them with reins of kindness,
with leading strings of love.

*When have you experienced tenderness in your own life?
How might you show tenderness in your present situation?*

Among the many Gospel passages reflecting tenderness:

Luke 7:11-17 – the widow of Nain
Luke 7:36-50 - the woman anointing Jesus
Luke 13:10-17 – crippled woman healed
John 8:1-11 – the adulterous woman

TENDERNESS PRAYER

***He will not break a bruised reed
Or quench a smoldering wick.***

[see Isaiah 42:1-4; Matthew 12:18-20]

Tenderness, tolerance, tireless mercy –
these are your marks, O God, and
the qualities brought to life in Jesus.
Such beauty, birthing great hope.

Thank you
for the forgiveness you hold out to me and to everyone;
for the love you have for me and for everyone;
for the time you have for all of us, and
for the time you give us...

May my forgiving and loving
be as yours –
making my time a gift to you,
to serve with
tenderness, tolerance and endless mercy.

Compassionate Companion
you are the parent who cannot forget
the child of her womb
you are the mother hen whose wings
shelter and protect her little ones
you are the eagle that hovers,
keeping safe the fledgling
I entrust myself to you
Compassionate Companion
protector and guide
needful yet hopeful
I am yours

DAY TWENTYONE – CONTAGION

SETTING: photos or names of people, places, situations that have influenced you for good.

Prayer:

It's getting hard, Lord, living in a bubble.
I want to burst through it, to touch and to hold
and to live in the closeness I'm used to
instead of this closed-in existence.
But I know the danger, the ease with which I
can contract Coronavirus and pass it on.
Strengthen me to do what is right:
to stay at home, to keep my distance,
to respect this most contagious invader
and to pray and work for its defeat.
Amen.

CONTAGION – it's from the Latin, *contagion*, meaning contact or touching. While the world awaits an antidote to Coronavirus, Covid-19, we're advised the best approach is frequent washing of hands, keeping two metres apart from others when speaking, walking or shopping, and avoiding physical contact with people, objects, animals or anything outside of our personal "bubble".

This prayer time invites reflection on your attitude to the present situation and the restrictions being placed on your personal freedom. But also, and especially, to consider *contagion* in its widest sense – what the dictionary calls "a spreading social evil, a corrupting influence".

SCRIPTURE – Matthew 15:1-20 – Read and Meditate

Jesus notes the cultural concern for cleanliness as a way of avoiding disease (not unlike the present insistence about hand washing, etc.), but broadens the discussion, pointing out that a greater contagion can come from **within** a person. We each have within us the ability to destroy the mind, the heart, the reputation of others – something far worse than a physical illness.

It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles. [Matthew 15:11] and [vs 18]:

What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles.

REFLECT

- What speaks to you through this scripture about your own ability to “defile”?
- Can you identify anything in your own behaviour, attitude, outlook, conversation, that might be “contagious”, in the sense of being a “corrupting influence”?

Contagion refers not only to negative influence. On the positive side:

There is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious than laughter and good humour – Charles Dickens

It was the way you laughed... I knew I wanted that in my life – R M Drake

A smile is contagious – be a carrier!

We all smile in the same language!

*Smiling is infectious
You catch it like the flu
When someone smiled at me today
I started smiling too*

*I passed around the corner
And someone saw my grin
When he smiled I realised
I'd passed it on to him*

*I thought about that smile
Then I realised its worth
A single smile, just like mine
Could travel round the earth*

*So if you feel a smile begin
Don't leave it undetected
Let's start an epidemic quick
And get the world infected.*

[Spike Milligan]

A smile lights up the darkest day and outshines the stars at night
Smiles calm the fears of little ones and put their tears to flight
A smile will take you unaware for there's nothing quite as bright.

SCRIPTURE – Ephesians 4:29-32

Let your words be for the improvement of others, as occasion offers, and do good to your listeners... Never have grudges against others, or lose your temper, or raise your voice to anybody, or call each other names, or allow any sort of spitefulness. Be friends with one another, and kind, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ.

St Paul is concerned that the “new life” given in baptism is fully developed. It is this life – life in Christ – that draws the baptised into the lives of others, their needs, their concerns, and draws away from selfishness. Reflecting on Paul’s instruction (above), in what ways do you see these good behaviours and attitudes becoming “infectious” or “contagious”?

INTERCESSIONS – to a caring God

For those working to halt the spread of Coronavirus and beat the contagion that is causing death, grief and great loss throughout the world.... [R]

In your love and care, protect and guide us.

For scientists and others trying to develop an antidote to defeat this new and grave threat to humanity.... [R]

For the safety and protection of doctors, nurses and all medical staff, placing themselves in danger as they treat the infected and seriously ill.... [R]

For all worried and fearful in this time of uncertainty.... [R]

For our world and the nations of people: may whatever influence we have be used for the good health of earth and one another, only for good.... [R]

Visit us [Anne Powell]

In breath of wind

In endurance of cliffs

In glow of kowhai

In silence of stars

In solitude of moon

In eyes of the poor

In embrace of a mother

In pleasure of friends

In faith that does justice.