

8 April 2020

EASTER 2020

We have never experienced an Easter like this – with churches closed, public worship suspended and people confined to their homes. If ever there is a time for Christians to be together, it is Easter. But social distancing makes that impossible. Yet the term “social distancing” is misleading: it is a physical distancing which doesn’t have to mean social or spiritual distancing. Social distancing would mean an isolation, especially of the most vulnerable; and that’s not what we need to meet the challenge of COVID-19. On the contrary: that kind of isolation will make things worse. We need new forms of solidarity, not new forms of isolation.

Nor does physical distancing means spiritual distancing: if anything, it can mean the opposite; and there are already signs of unexpected spiritual fruits emerging in the midst of the crisis. This Easter we are called to a new kind of creativity which will allow physical distancing produce new forms of spiritual closeness – closeness to God and to each other. There is a grace in the restrictions of COVID-19, and it’s up to us to discover it. Beyond the crisis, the Church will be enriched in unforeseen ways; and that will be because of the spiritual creativity we have shown through these difficult times. There is providence in this.

The Cross of Jesus says that there is no dark place, no depth of human desolation, where Jesus is not present. Once he rises from the dead, nothing can keep him out. Our doors may be closed, but Jesus walks through closed doors. Jesus is in the darkness of COVID-19; it’s only a question of whether we have eyes to see him. We don’t know how long this will last or where we will end up on the other side; and that uncertainty can aggravate our anxiety. But at Easter we say that Jesus is the light which dispels even the darkness of death. So when we sing “The Light of Christ!” on Easter night, even in an empty church, we are speaking the truth to all the world – that the virus may be new but the remedy, the vaccine of God, is not. May the peace of Easter be with you all.

+Mark Coleridge