

Dear brothers and sisters

I would never have thought that I would sit in my study and have to talk to you through this medium reflecting on the situation we are in. A global pandemic that has brought much of the world to a standstill. We have heard the Government guidance that we can now only leave our homes under very limited circumstances and it looks as though we will be in this position for a number of weeks to come. Even though I knew this was a possibility, the announcement last night was arresting. Life is going to be different. It feels like we have been dislocated from the inalienable rights we have enjoyed. Our freedoms of movement and activity and worship are being denied us by Covid-19. Someone in Bethlehem today referred to this situation as the Corona Siege.

It is natural for us to ask where is God in all of this? And we might, in all honesty, wonder where the answer might be.

But humanity has been here before. We have faced the desolation and dislocation of the lives we have enjoyed. We find it woven into God's story.

The book of Lamentations is not a book of the Bible we often turn to but I have found myself in it in the last week. It was composed in response to the destruction and disruption of the temple in Jerusalem. The centre of religious and cultural life, the centre of Israel's sense of selfhood in God was destroyed. They were a dislocated people seeking God in a foreign land.

Their response was lament which was, and is, a holy response to voice before God without hindrance or politeness what we feel about the situation we find ourselves in. It's telling God what this is like and how we feel. Not only can it give us a catharsis, it draws God into our drama.

Tomorrow will be the feast day of the Annunciation of Jesus to Mary. Our attention will be drawn to the promise of a child to be born. When God's people needed reassurance, we find the promise of Christ. God born into the world, to live among us. God was drawing into the drama in a visible and tangible way.

And so, our lament is not empty but enables us to regain our glimpse of God among us. In amongst the lamentations is the voice of hope: "the steadfast hope of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning...the Lord is my portion, says my soul".

How we live in these days and weeks will be different. Be assured that the ministers in the circuit and many others besides are praying for us all and we are completing processes to ensure we can keep in touch with everyone in our church communities. We will be reflecting on how we can enable our circuit to continue to worship and have fellowship over these coming weeks. Do get in touch with any ideas and offers to help!

If you need someone to talk to or need help, do get in touch.

I leave you, for now, with words of Saint Oscar Romero who's feast day is today:

If we are worth anything,  
it is not because we have more money,  
or more talent,  
or more human qualities.

Insofar as we are worth anything,  
it is because we are grafted into Christ's life,  
his cross and resurrection.

That is a person's measure.

Stay well, stay safe. Keep the faith and keep praying.

May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
Be with us today and all days. Amen.