

## READING MINSTER

WEEKLY LETTER - 25<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2020

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*“Go my people, enter your rooms and shut your doors behind you. Take cover for a little while and the fury will be over” (Isaiah 26 v 20)*

The world and the way we live seem to have changed in ways that a month ago seemed unimaginable. The culmination of this was on Monday night when the Prime Minister addressed the nation on live television. The message was both stark and clear; we as a nation had to withdraw behind our doors and keep away from our extended family, our friends and indeed everyone.

There are so many repercussions to the current outbreak across the world of Covid 19. Our town centres are silent as shops, restaurants, cinemas, gyms, bars and hairdressers all close their doors to ensure we go behind our own closed doors. The repercussions are both physical and mental. We can see the physical in the deserted streets and empty trains. What we cannot see is the impact it is having on so many people who are likely to be depressed and anxious. It is at times like this they more than ever need our support and yet we cannot, we are not permitted, to see them much as they want to see us.

Our Bishop, Olivia, sent out a note recently referring to four ‘C’s. These meant we should be

- Calm - and avoid panic buying;
- Caring - we care in whatever way it is possible for those in need of that care;
- Compassionate - it is at times like this we need to show compassion.

And to be

- Christ like.

Let’s put others before us rather than ourselves. That most certainly is Christ like.

With scenes of people panic buying there does not seem to be calmness all around. I heard a story of a young woman at the front of a supermarket queue with a trolley sensibly stocked. Behind her was a man with an overfilled trolley. He lent forward and took four items from her trolley. When she questioned him he simply replied that nothing in the trolley was hers until she had paid for it? How many of us would have remained calm if that had happened either to us or in our presence? And yet we are asked to be calm and to show care.

To care and to show compassion will go hand in hand. We care inwardly and we show it by being compassionate. So let us look for the signs of care and compassion in the days that lie ahead. Next week I will illustrate with a positive sign of care and compassion as against the illustration of lack of calmness this week. If you see or hear of one then let us know by email (to the above address) so they can be shared.

The words of the Prophet Isaiah at the top of this letter race through the centuries since they were written and stare us in the face here in 2020. The “fury” will be over but in the meantime keep faithful, acknowledge the power of prayer through prayer, and remember the words of Bishop Olivia.

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