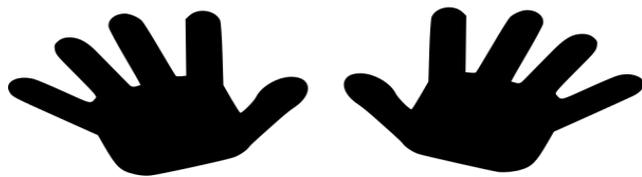


From the Rectory

Dear friends,

As I pen this letter halfway through March, it feels that we're under siege with this coronavirus which is sweeping through the world. Today, we await the next directive from the Government following their 'Cobra' meeting and by the time you read this, I'm sure there will be further updates for us to observe. We now have a ban on using the chalice in Holy Communion and it could be that Church gatherings are banned, as in Italy.

What should our response be to this epidemic? It will pass but certainly not before it gets a whole lot worse. We all need to be vigilant and observe the basics of hand hygiene... wash very often and for a minimum of 20 seconds. Don't shake hands with people – just acknowledge them with a nod of the head or, as someone said yesterday, with 'jazz hands!'



Don't linger in public places and be conscious of those near to you. Simple, common sense principles will help enormously.

This virus will hit Balcombe and the surrounding areas and I want to ask you all to re-discover what it is to be a good neighbour. If you have elderly, vulnerable or shy people living near to you; those who generally keep 'themselves to themselves' or those who only use their Balcombe home occasionally, try and keep an 'eye' on them and if you have their 'phone number or e-mail address, so much the better. Keep in contact with them and keep asking if they're OK? In these circumstances it's better to be a nuisance than to keep our usual 'British reserve!' If someone has the virus, then help with shopping may well be important. This can be left on the step. If you are in 'phone contact, you can see if they have other needs with which you might be able to help.

The events of today reminded me of the story of the villagers in Eyam, in Derbyshire – a short extract reads:

On 1 November 1666 farm worker Abraham Morten gasped his final breath - the last of 260 people to die from bubonic plague in the remote Derbyshire village of Eyam. Their fate had been sealed four months earlier when the entire village made the remarkable decision to quarantine itself in an heroic attempt to halt the spread of the Great Plague.

Here the villagers imposed quarantine on themselves and were fed with food passed to them from nearby, unaffected villages. If they did this in the 1660's, we can certainly do it in 2020!

Easter will also soon be upon us... a time to think of Resurrection and how that which seems hopeless is transformed into something full of hope and vitality. As we live through these dark days, I ask that we can remember that there will be a bright tomorrow.

Look after yourselves and each other. If I can help in any way, please contact me – my number is in this Magazine.

Fr Keith