

18th March 2020

From Fr Keith....

By now, I'm sure you will all know that the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have suspended public worship in all our Churches at this present time. The Coronavirus (Covid-19) is now impinging on all our lives and there is a very urgent need for us all to stay safe. This leads us to feel somewhat fragile and isolated as many of our usual routines are no longer available to us and we lack the familiar contact with family and friends.

There are so many ways people will use to keep in contact but I will write every week and can I ask you to forward this letter on to as many people as you think might find it useful or helpful.

It is said that in the midst of a crisis, we see the best in so many people. Sadly, the worst also as witnessed in our supermarkets in the last few days; however, the best is what we need to see and I know Balcombe is already rising to the challenge. Many of our folk will now begin to isolate themselves and keep themselves out of harm's way. This is a lonely experience as we all need some human companionship. The telephone is a great friend and we must all use it to the full, to contact one another and especially to call those who are both lonely and a little frightened.

Whilst the Balcombe Community Website will be continuously updated and become a good point of contact with regard to news and advice we realise that not everyone has access to the internet or uses social media. Also, the biggest problem will be feelings of loneliness and isolation therefore;

Phone x 6

Phone x 6 The idea being to phone and have a chat to six people then ask them to do the same. This gives opportunity for those who are self isolating to be involved in supporting others.

Don't think someone else is doing it - they might be - but too many calls is better than too few. Just get on and do it - one call a day with Sundays off!

Some may need help with food deliveries especially the staples of life like milk and bread. This can be bought and left of the doorstep. Try and check to see if people are registered for 'on-line shopping' and if not, they may need a **'shopping**

buddy'. Skype and Facetime can be useful ways to keep 'in touch' and you may be able to talk someone through on how to set it up on the 'phone.

Beginning tomorrow, St Mary's Church will be open for anyone to use from 12.00 until 4.00pm each day. We ask you simply to wash your hands and dry them on a paper towel which will be provided and then bin it. Try to handle things as little as possible. Perhaps just sit and be still, pray if you do and, if you wish, light a candle on the stand in front of the Chapel Altar. Think of those who are suffering; of those who are frightened and of course, for your family and friends. Our thoughts and prayers are needed for those who are working tirelessly in our hospitals, GP Services and other healthcare operatives. The candle burning on the windowsill reminds us all of the abiding sacramental presence of Christ in the Aumbry below.

I too, may be in the vulnerable category by virtue of health and age and may need to self-isolate, at some point! I don't relish this thought at all but if it happens, I will spend more time in prayer and being on the end of the 'phone for any who may wish to speak with me... about anything at all!

I am always heartened when I read the story in the Bible about Jesus being a guest at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. The situation seemed hopeless; all the guests had arrived for the party (which, incidentally went on for about three days!) and very early on, the wine ran out - a tragedy indeed! The mother of Jesus, Mary, simply brought this problem to Jesus' attention to which he rightly replied 'Why turn to me?' - it wasn't his party and he certainly wasn't the organiser; but no one who approaches Jesus is ever turned away and Mary know that he would act! He told the Stewards to fill six very large stone jars to the brim with water from the well. This they did and when some was drawn off it was now wonderful wine! A wonderful story of transformation. That hopeless situation was transformed and the party could go on.... It was some party with 180 gallons of the best wine to go at!! ... and all because Mary took a desperate situation to Jesus! A verse from a hymn so wonderfully encapsulates this:

*What a friend we have in Jesus;
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear -
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!*

Fr Keith

