

Our Ref: +PBW--+RT/ajh

3 April 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers

This comes with huge gratitude to you for all you have been doing in recent days in witnessing to God's love for the world. Thank you! The words from Morning Prayer have perhaps never seemed so real. "May we walk this day in the way of the cross and always be ready to share its weight". We are very conscious that for some of you that weight is particularly heavy as you bear the burden of loved ones who are ill or dying and as you carry other personal and pastoral concerns. You yourself may be unwell.

As we enter this holiest of weeks, we are very conscious that the emptiness of Holy Saturday expresses something of how we might all be feeling. We know that many of you are finding it challenging to find ways in which to mark the significance of this walk to the cross and yet also finding profound resonance this year. As we find ourselves restricted by health advice in our ability to accompany folk through death and grief perhaps we understand more of how those disciples felt, being fearful about drawing physically close to Jesus on the cross or feeling the loss of the burial rituals due to Sabbath laws.

In these days of solitude, we want to encourage you to find rhythms of prayer which will assist you in your own walk of faith. Some of you may be establishing new Rules of Life around how you pray with others or alone. We pray that this may be a week where we are able to lay aside some of the pressures of unnecessary work to find space for personal renewal.

Our usual patterns are not going to be possible this Holy Week as the Chrism Mass has been postponed and usual liturgies of gathering have to be set aside. For those of you who are clergy it is our custom on Holy Tuesday to renew our ordination vows. We are therefore inviting all licensed clergy to join us on Tuesday, online, so that we can recommit ourselves to God's service and pray for one another. This will be a very short act of prayer and commitment. Details will be made available to licensed clergy shortly

Cont'd ...

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From Palm Sunday there will be a short personal reflection from diocesan team members, Archdeacons and Bishops each day of the week with a special celebration by Bishop Peter on Easter Sunday. Please do join us via the diocesan website if you can and cascade these messages to others as is appropriate. On our diocesan website you will also see opportunities to mark Palm Sunday with a branch from a tree in your window, a family activity to colour in and display an Easter picture in your windows on Easter Sunday, and the invitation to join in the national Sing Resurrection <https://ctbi.org.uk/sing-resurrection/> Do look at the website for further information and keep an eye on our Facebook and Twitter channels.

Our 'Holy Saturday' during this crisis may be longer than any of us first imagined, however we know that the hope of Resurrection will come. We look forward to that time when we can gather again to renew our call to ministry in our Cathedral and give thanks to God for His grace and presence with us. As Christ walked the way of the cross for love of us may we walk with him in our fear and in our hope.

With our love, prayers and thanksgiving for you.

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Attachments:

A number of queries have been made around issues regarding buildings and staffing arrangements and further information can be found on the diocesan website at <https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/>

In addition, we know that many of you are longing to deliver special materials for reflection to your congregations for them to participate in the significance of this Holy Week. We would encourage you to remember the stringent hygiene guidance and thus the dangers of spreading the virus through personal contact. The advised and preferred way of delivery is through the postal service.

We know we are still climbing the curve here in Somerset in respect of the coronavirus outbreak and yet we are already experiencing the challenges of funerals where mourners are restricted, and in some cases, where crematoria are beginning to move to direct cremations without celebrants present. This affects the care we can offer. In usual circumstances clergy are expected to consult with Archdeacons over the waiving of fees. DBF fees are no longer at issue regarding church funerals as these are no longer possible. The graveside burial fee stands at £108. We leave to your discretion the decision as to whether fees should be waived for pastoral reasons.

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