



Catholic Spirituality Network

CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY NETWORK

NEWSLETTER EDITION 9

SPECIAL LENT EDITION 2020



CORONAVIRUS: HOLDING IT ALL TOGETHER: A REFLECTION ON THE CURRENT EPIDEMIC, CHRISTOPHER CHAPMAN

Coronavirus has come amongst us, and we are in a state of shock. For a moment we feel we have adjusted, but then another news item, a further restriction on movement, or the realization of just how much change we are dealing with sweeps us off our feet again. How do you adjust when what you are adjusting to keeps moving?

It reminds me of going swimming in Whitstable, close to where I live. I feel comfortable swimming just so far out, so though I have freedom of movement through the waves, when I want to, I can put my feet down and feel the beach below me. But the tides there quickly shift, taking me further out than I imagine. Then when I put my feet down there is only sea beneath me. I swim further in; but just as I am beginning to relax I find again there is no foothold for my feet. I have to work again to touch ground...and then the tide sweeps me out again and I can find no footing.

Many of us are living with loss. Jobs have gone, projects have been cancelled, places of meeting are now closed; contact with loved ones has been reduced to a phone call or a blurry online image. There are fears that break into our day's consciousness and our night's sleep: 'Will my business survive?' 'How will I find the money to support my family?' 'Will my mother be alright?' 'What happens if I get the virus?' For some 'social isolation' is all that is says: no contacts...no connections with people. There are small daily inconveniences that bring home the reality of what is taking place: the struggle to find eggs or pasta;

the closure of the shops that provide the very thing we need. For many the experience is disorientating. 'Where has my life gone?' 'Where is my comfortable routine?' 'What do I do now?'

For those of us who are Christian this might feel like a Lenten wilderness – and this time an all too real one, not of our choosing. We are doing without so much we once took for granted. This wilderness is a wild and untamed place that tests what it is we live for and reveals our hidden anxieties and needs. And – as Mark's account of Jesus in the wilderness tells – where the wild beasts roam the angels also wait on us [Mark 1.12-13]. This time is also unfolding unexpected gifts:

More of us are exercising now that we are limited to one time of exercise a day!

In solitude we might begin to discover that even as we face ourselves, we also face the kindness of God.

In fresh awareness that we cannot fully control our lives, we sense the invitation to rest our all in God.

Those who have lived driven lives start to wonder what it is they live for: what is it that really matters?

Perhaps we are beginning to have more moments in our day when we are simply present to what 'is': the sheer beauty of a spring day, the wonder of birdsong.

Those who share a household spend more time in one another's company. The challenges are real, and so are the opportunities for growing closer.

The Earth is breathing more easily now we are consuming less. Do we need everything we counted as so essential?



In a time of physical separation, we are seeing afresh the importance of connection. Volunteer helpers sign up to support the vulnerable. We are beginning to take more care of one another.



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Do we want to just go back to what we once counted as 'normal'? Do we want to begin to do things differently?

Holding it all together

How do we hold together the struggles and the gifts of this time? A 3-letter word to be careful of is 'but':

If we say, 'yes there is loss, fear and difficulty but God is with me', we might underplay or deny the very real struggles and feelings we experience.

If we say, 'God is with me, but look at how my world has fallen apart', then before we know it, we might begin to 'lose' God and be left only with our fears.

Instead of 'but' use another 3-letter word: 'and':

'I feel afraid and lost and God is with me.'

'God is with me and I feel afraid and lost.'

'And' enables us to hold all that is real within this experience together, without denying any of it.



After all, the Paschal mystery we are soon to celebrate holds together the cross, the tomb and the resurrection. All are real – and often all are together in one place.

Many thanks to Chris for writing up this reflection for us, which he shared as part of our online liturgy on Sunday 22 March.

STAY & PRAY

SHARED RESOURCES

Although not accessible to everyone, the online world is providing valuable connection while we are mostly staying at home.



CSN Members are sending in useful links and setting up shared spaces.

We are adding these to a new 'Stay & Pray' page on our website, and include them here, in the hope they may help us support each other and form a Christian response to the crisis.

Opportunities for live-streaming of Mass:

- [**Daily Mass with Pope Francis**](#)
- [**Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Cork**](#)
- [**St Mary of the Angels, Worthing**](#)

A more general place of support, prayer and inspiration set up by two CSN members on the Bishops' Spirituality Group:

[**CCC Christ Covid Community**](#)

From the Jesuits in Britain:

[**Pray as you go website**](#)

[**Pathways to God**](#)

[**other suggested resources here**](#)



Catholic Spirituality Network

CSN CONFERENCE 2020 COME TO THE WATERS

Putting out into the deep of God and the deep of human experience



NEW DATE 13-15 November

Our 2020 Conference, **Come to the Waters**, has been rearranged for the weekend 13–15 November 2020 at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Thank you to the Hayes for offering us this flexibility. We hope that most of you, if not all, are able to make this new date.

Please contact Margaret in the office with any questions or requests about this change.

We are fortunate that Christopher Chapman, our speaker, and Julie McCann, our liturgist, are both able to make the new date, so we are glad that the Conference can remain substantially the same. There are still places available and an updated booking form is on the web if you hadn't booked already and would like to join us.

<http://csn.retreats.org.uk/conference.php>

*In **Come to the Waters** we will explore how we open ourselves afresh to the flow of the Spirit. The waters of God are deep beyond measure, dangerous, yet creative, still, but always in movement. Drawing from the Bible, the words of Pope Francis, and poets and teachers within the Christian spiritual tradition we will explore the risks, challenges and opportunities of expressing forms of holiness fit for our times.*

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Finding ourselves on a path that we had not expected to tread, the COVID-19 pandemic is causing waves of disruption, uncertainty, distress and loss - coupled with an overwhelming humanitarian response of deep concern for those we love and serve - in those who continue to be caregivers and in those who have responsibility for the most vulnerable in our communities.



These are sobering times. While Lent leads us onwards as people of the Gospel, the instinctive reliance on God in all things draws us into the living mystery of the Passion and the transforming power of Christ's love.

In the context of the Year of the Word, in the light of the Rededication of England as the Dowry of Mary, in the yearning of the human heart to be connected and in the urgent need of our neighbour, we are deeply blessed in being able to retain our voice, to pray, watch and wait, and to be with Christ in his suffering sisters and brothers.

Unable to go ahead with our 2020 Conference this Spring, we put out a call to a time of shared prayer online on the evening of Sunday 22 March. We are very grateful to Julie, our liturgist and Chris, our keynote speaker, for leading the deeply reflective prayer. We were able to gather in a creative and thoughtful style, from within our own homes and from within all the busy-ness of our lives, to be attentive to Christ's call to be with Him. Through readings, reflection and prayer, we were able to realise the bond that being a praying community affirms and to celebrate Christ's peace at the heart of a world in disarray.

In gratitude for the richness of being a community alive to God's Spirit, I pray that the unique response that is total dependence on God will sustain us in the period ahead and will enable us to grow in freedom as we and our world are made new.

Thanks to all who are enhancing our Network through offering links and sharing spaces and contact at this time.

*With good wishes and prayer,
Shirley*



Catholic Spirituality Network

EVENTS

REDEDICATION OF ENGLAND AS MARY'S DOWRY

SUNDAY 29 MARCH 2020

LIVE-STREAMING AT NOON FROM THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF WALSINGHAM: REDEDICATION PRAYERS & MASS.

<https://www.walsingham.org.uk/rededication/>

TAIZE PRAYERS

EVERY EVENING: LIVE-STREAMING FROM THE TAIZE COMMUNITY IN FRANCE.

https://www.taize.fr/en_article27540.html

CSN CONFERENCE

13-15 NOVEMBER 2020

COME TO THE WATERS

<http://csn.retreats.org.uk/conference.php>

MAKING IT A RETREAT

There are many other helpful resources. For a more thorough overview than we can offer here, do have a look at the Independent Catholic News website.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com>

The Liturgy Office of the Catholic Church offers much useful information and guidelines.

<http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Flu/ind ex.shtml>

And their Spirituality Committee has prepared a leaflet with some ideas about using the time of self-isolation as a retreat.

<http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Flu/Retreat.pdf>

PRAYER



A time to be still and at peace, in silence you came to us.

As we seek to find you, we welcome you into our hearts.

We open our inner thoughts to you, as you know what is on our mind.

We seek your will for our lives, as we sit in stillness with you.

Thank you to Diana Pinchin, who has offered us a collection of religious poems for Holy Week – more on the web!

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Executive Committee: Shirley Taylor (Chair), Eamonn Hamilton (Treasurer) Mary Groom, Audrey Hamilton, Fr Chris Thomas.

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