**To the Clergy of the Archdiocese of Southwark**

Friday 10 July 2020

*‘Thus says the Lord; the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty.’ (Is 55: 11)*

Dear brothers in Christ

I hope this week’s lockdown email finds you well. I will hopefully send out an *ad clerum* next week and conclude these weekly emails to the clergy at the end of July.

For a time I was a prison chaplain in Leeds. One of men in the prison gave me poem he’d written himself on a scrap of paper. It read like this:

*This is a prayer for the broken;*

*A hymn to the rhythm of seeing;*

*A cry from a fractured hosanna,*

*To the vastness and mercy of being.*

Those words speak to me of a hope rising out of misery, of a desire for God coming from the rock-bottom of pain and regret. When I’m on my own, God is with me. When no one else listens to me, God hears me. When life - past, present, and future - all just seems too much, we cry out in prayer.

One particular phrase from that poem fascinates me. It’s the line: ‘*A cry from a fractured hosanna.’*The word ‘hosanna’ has a Hebrew root. It means something like, *‘save now, we pray.’* The poem suggests that people’s life experiences - what’s happened to them, what others have done to them, and what they’ve done to others – somehow, these experiences stop people crying out to God with a fully functioning *‘hosanna.’* To put it another way, in the words of Leonard Cohen, some people have a *‘broken hallelujah.’*

Words of hope are like seeds scattered by a farmer. Sometimes they falls on the edge of the path. They get eaten by the birds, they are taken away from us. Sometimes seeds of hope fall on rocky ground where there’s no soil. When life gets difficult the words just die away, scorched by the sun. Sometimes thorns grow up and choke the seeds of hope. Our worries and obsessions thwart the words of hope growing within us.

When experience steals our hope, when our hosanna is fractured and our hallelujah broken, precisely then we need to open our hearts to the Lord Jesus’ word of life. Into the soil of our heart He wants to plant the seed of His love, the seed of His mercy, and the seed of His hope. He wants His life to grow within us.

Fractured or broken, in whatever sense, our hosanna and our hallelujah become prayers. We cry out*, ‘hosanna,’* *‘Save now, we pray,’*fill us with you compassionate love. *‘Hallelujah,’* we say, we praise you for your faithfulness and mercy.

By faith we proclaim to the world, to ourselves, and to each other, that we have a hope in the Lord Jesus. He is the mender of splintered lives. He is divine mercy in person. He is the human face of God’s compassion. We live by the certitude of hope that flows from the words the Lord Jesus has planted in our hearts*: ‘Do not be afraid’ – ‘I am with you always.’*

**Updated and Additional Guidance on the Celebration of the Sacraments**

Please find attached updated and additional guidance on the celebration of the Sacraments. Please also note that the guidance is mandatory in the Archdiocese of Southwark and should be followed along with all necessary hygiene and social distancing measures. This applies equally to Assisting Priests, Deacons, Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and any others in the sanctuary. I would be grateful if you could ensure that the guidance is properly implemented, especially with respect to the reception of Holy Communion by those in the sanctuary, some of whom will then distribute Holy Communion to others.

·        Updated **Guidance for the celebration of Mass** – this has been slightly changed and the relevant changes are shown in red in the text (Revision 7) and reproduced here:

Ø Readers should sanitise their hands before and after reading, or be supplied with single-use gloves, and should avoid touching the microphones or the Lectionary during the Liturgy of the Word, apart from page turning.

Ø At this point, the other Ministers of Holy Communion who will assist the priest come forward, cleanse their hands and receive Holy Communion under one kind.  They should then cleanse their hands again before receiving their ciborium from which they remove the covering or pall if it is still in place.

Ø If there is space for the celebration of Mass outdoors around the Church, which allows for the social distancing guidelines of Government to be fulfilled, and that all of the above liturgical advice can be done safely, then there is no reason why Mass cannot be celebrated outside of a church within the boundary of the parish property.  If a Catholic parish school or its grounds is to be used for Mass, a separate risk assessment has to be done, the appropriate school authority (Governing Body or Trust) has to give its permission, and both the parish and school insurers should be informed before the event takes place

·        **Guidance for Concelebration with a Congregation** – this has two parts, for concelebrants who normally live together (for example, a religious community or a number of priests in a presbytery) and concelebration which draws concelebrants from separate households.

·        **Guidance for the Celebration of the Sacrament of Infant Baptism**

·        **Guidance for the Celebration of Marriages**

·        **Guidance for Pastoral care of the Housebound** (Sacrament of the Sick and Home Communion Visits).  Please note that visits to multiple homes is discouraged by Government guidance as this risks multiple households

·        **Update on Singing and Music**

·        **Test and Trace –**The Catholic Church, along with other organisations, has been asked to co-operate with ‘Test and Trace’ as outlined in my email on 1 July (copy attached).This is not compulsory, but part of Government guidance in service of the common good, and should be implemented wherever possible in the simple ways outlined. Any person refusing to co-operate in giving their contact details should be recorded as *‘a person who did not wish to give their details,’* but this is not an obstacle to attending Mass. However, **everyone** is obliged to follow the hygiene and social distancing requirements.

·        Further guidance will soon be available concerning the Sacrament of Confirmation which will mean that, with the guidance about Baptism already provided, Catechumens and Candidates will soon be able to initiated into the Church. This is something that you may wish to begin to think about. I will send the information as soon as it is available.

Please pray for **John Howard, Giovanni Prandini, Peter Sebastian** and **Dermott O’Gorman** who will be ordained to the priesthood for our Archdiocese in the coming weeks. We look forward to welcoming them into the presbyterate and to their ministry among us. Sadly, there are some restrictions and limitations in place which mean that only invited guests may attend. We, nonetheless, all join in praying for each of them as they prepare to be conformed to Christ the Head of His Body, the Church.

Please also keep in your prayers some of our brother priests and deacons who are experiencing illness or particular challenges at this time.

***Prayer to Mary, Mother of Hope***

Mary, Mother of hope, accompany us on our journey!

Teach us to proclaim the living God;

help us to bear witness to Jesus, the one Saviour;

make us kindly towards our neighbours,

welcoming to the needy, concerned for justice,

impassioned builders of a more just world;

intercede for us as we carry out our work in history,

certain that the Father’s plan will be fulfilled.

Dawn of a new world,

show yourself the Mother of hope and watch over us!

Watch over the Church in Europe:

may she be transparently open to the Gospel;

may she be an authentic place of communion;

may she carry out fully her mission of

proclaiming, celebrating and serving the Gospel of hope for the peace and joy of all.

Queen of Peace, Protect the men and women of the third millennium!

Watch over all Christians: may they advance confidently on the path of unity,

as a leaven of harmony for the continent.

Watch over young people: the hope of the future,

may they respond with generosity to the call of Jesus.

Watch over the leaders of nations:

may they be committed to building a common house

which respects the dignity and rights of every person.

Mary, give us Jesus!

Grant that we may follow him and love him!

He is the hope of the Church, of Europe and of all humanity!

He lives with us, in our midst, in his Church!

With you we say: “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20).

May the hope of glory which he has poured into our hearts bear fruits of justice and peace! ( St John Paul II, Ecclesia in Europa, 125)

Thank you for your continued faithful ministry. It is greatly appreciated. I remain united with you and praying for you. Please pray for me.

With every blessing and the assurance of prayers

Yours devotedly in Christ

+ John

Most Rev John Wilson

Archbishop of Southwark