

Pastoral Letter May 2021: Revd Sue Cooper Writes

Dear Friends,

I wonder how you are feeling now that we are beginning to come through this lockdown? I, like many others, keep swinging from being ecstatically happy at the prospect of doing normal things again; having now had a few social times with friends and family (albeit outdoors!) enjoying simple pleasures, but then catching myself and thinking, "don't get carried away, a third wave of Covid is possible, and could ruin it all"....; How draining it is to live with such conflicting emotions sitting side by side in our minds and hearts. This is not an easy time for any of us to navigate through. So many folk have told me they are fatigued with the draining effects of the lockdown, so much so that it's hard for them to feel any excitement at all about the future.

Where can we take all of this, where can we unburden ourselves? The only place we can get peace from all of these inner conflicts is in the quiet presence of God.

It sounds ironic that after so much isolation and solitude I should advise you to get alone with God and be quiet, but it really is the remedy for an anxious and troubled mind and heart. Jesus used to take himself off to a quiet place to be alone with his Father on a very regular basis. And He learnt what it meant to gain perspective, to find peace, and to draw strength from Gods presence, so much so that He was able to offer that peace and strength to others that felt overwhelmed; He said "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest"

It is a huge relief to be able to come to God in prayer and just be ourselves, not having to do anything or say anything, just to be with him. There is nothing that God does not know about us, He sees all the conflicts of our hearts and minds, He sees the burdens we are carrying and the struggles we have and He has compassion on us and loves us. What a blessing it is to be completely known by God and loved by him, warts and all. What a relief.

I was impressed by hearing the comedian Frank Skinner as he spoke of his faith on Songs of Praise last Sunday... he said that when he prays it is the only time that he is profoundly himself, and completely honest ... with no act or front. And he spoke of how liberating that felt to him. He also spoke of his doubts; he said he had been a 'cradle Catholic' but left the Church aged 19 because of his doubts; and how he had struggled with his faith, and yet could not let faith go. And after unburdening all of this to a Priest, the wise old Priest simply said to him "Come back". And he did, he surrendered his heart and mind back to God in simple trust, and continued his journey through life, with his faith central to his life again, he simply "came back" to God and to Church.

If you have given up on God or Church and cannot find peace, "come back". Open your heart to God again and allow him to help you through the days. God bless you,

With love

Revd Sue.

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Luke 15: 20-24 So he got up and went to his Father. But while he was still a long way off, his Father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his Son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The Son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your Son.' But the Father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this Son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.