

THE
Christian
Community

MOVEMENT
FOR RELIGIOUS
RENEWAL

Hartfield Road
Forest Row, RH18 5DZ
tccinfr@gmail.com
01342 825 436

Friday, 20th March 2020

Dear community!

We are all now feeling our way into the conditions that have been more or less imposed upon us. We all know what it is like when something is inflicted upon us - we feel restricted and pushed into a corner, perhaps even resentful. And yet this, if anything, will give us a chance to re-evaluate the way we live our lives; and to creatively discover ways of doing things which we had never even thought of before!

So, one of the first things that we can take from this, it seems to me, is that this asks us to become immensely creative in all that we do, and how we see things and think about them. It is this creative power which is at the heart of what we call in the Act of Consecration, the Son-God. Whatever one may make of something called a 'Son-God', it might be helpful just to think in terms of it being the creative aspect of the human being. We become creators of our reality; creative artists shaping our reality. Can it be that this strange situation is asking us to break out of our habits, and become creative artists, fashioning the world around us, rather than passively submitting to circumstances?

Unless we have respiratory problems, then we all take breathing for granted. Breathing is the fundament of life - and our entry into and exit from this world are accompanied by the in and out breath. Perhaps you remember when you were about 9 years old, asking yourself how long could you hold your breath! Trying it out in the playground with friends to see who could last longest! *Breathing in and holding on; what a strange feeling!* And then, it's enough! breathing out in one go, and the relief that comes with it!

At that age, one becomes more aware of things like the breath just for a short while - and then we forget it again. It becomes a self-evident given, of very little interest to us in comparison with the world around us and all it offers!

Then, when we're older, we might have cause to pause in life, and ask ourselves questions. Some will find their way to meditation, and discover their breathing once more. It becomes a strange journey of observation at first, and then suddenly, it carries you into new dimensions. It is as if the measured pace of in and out breath become a vessel for us to really begin to get to know ourselves and the world.

The breathing in is a taking in, accepting and assimilating into oneself; the breathing out is a letting go, and giving back. Everything we see and experience can go through the magic alchemy of this in and out breathing: taking it in, making it our own, saying yes to it; then giving it up, practicing non-attachment, and bestowing as a blessing to the world about us.

The current 'crisis' appears to attack our breathing- something we hardly ever notice and the fundament of all the things we take for granted. Is it not so that all the things we took for granted are suddenly under threat? Do we hold on to them, like a sharp in-breath, holding or 'hoarding' that breath; 'bulk' in-breathing?! "*Breathing in and holding on; what a strange feeling*". It's really not what we can or should do. Nor does a human soul want to. It is only the strange fear that comes when we feel our personal world is under threat, that might make us do so.

Breathing in is only healthy when it is balanced with a breathing out, which is a letting go. Breathing out is the 'dying' gesture of the last breath, the letting go.

Many of us have perhaps without realising it, been breathing steadily in for years now, holding our breath without really noticing it; I would suggest that our culture has been leading by example here for quite a while!

Now perhaps we can restore some balance by practicing letting go, breathing out, relaxing the built up tension, and becoming more balanced in our necessary oscillating between breathing the world and our individual destinies in - and breathing them out.

Gospel reading for the week commencing 22nd March

John 6:1-15 New International Version (NIV)

'Feeding of the Five Thousand'

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Festival was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages^[a] to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but what is this among so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

If we leave aside the many details that we might explore here, and call up before our inner eye the overall picture, then we perhaps see a picture of great nourishment being distributed. It is a nourishment that can provide sustenance for many. Especially in this time where large supermarkets are being overwhelmed by high demand for products, and long queues are forming by their doors, we can ask ourselves, what is the nourishment that we really need?

There is apparently little that issues from the altar: "what is this among

so many?" (6:9). And yet, through thanks (6:11 - the word is Eu-charist in Greek: a thanksgiving, a blessing, literally '**beautiful thanking**') it is more than enough to feed, nourish and sustain the human spirit.

Beautiful thanking: each and every one of us can practice this in our everyday moments. We now have time and opportunity to really go back to basics and re-evaluate everything. Perhaps now, we can express our gratitude for everything and everyone - not in a desperate way, fearful that we are about to lose them, and bitterly regretting our missed opportunities when we could have done so. But simply living profoundly in each moment with gratitude, with beautiful thanking.

Thanking slows us down, and makes us more human. We name thanking in the service when we raise the cup. It is central to the Eucharist. It *is* the Eucharist.

We can do so when there is a genuinely living place in our souls. This is the 'plenty of grass' among the mountain desert that is referred to (6:10). When we are being human, keeping our equanimity, conscious of our humanity, and aware of the precious human gift of our creativity within, then there is 'plenty of grass' in our soul. We can receive the quiet nourishment - and in doing so, become one of those who can 'gather the pieces left over' and bear them within, capable of nourishing others in these urgent times.

LB

For parents and children

Dear parents,

this is just to confirm what I am sure is already clear to you all: that for the while, outer activities at The Christian Community have had to cease.

That means that the Saturday Club, scheduled for this Saturday, and the service planned this Sunday for 11:20 am will not take place.

This will probably be the state of things for a while...

and so we are looking to see how we can creatively work with such a challenge, and to provide you with whatever spiritual substance we can for you and your family.

We are aiming to put up little videos on social media such as Facebook (if I can figure it all out!) of perhaps stories being told; or why we say certain prayers for children etc.

and to provide you regularly with seasonal & festival images and stories that you can use for your own contemplation and for telling the children, if you wish.

Perhaps, like me, you are mostly at home, with the children not at school, but who nonetheless need to keep active and healthy, and also need good healthy thoughts around them and nourishing them. So, my aim is to share with you a steady flow of what I hope will be helpful thoughts, images and stories for you and your children, starting as soon as possible.

All of these stories and images will aim to maintain our connection to the seasons, the earth and to each other, our communities. No doubt, they will also have relevance to the current situation we are in, too.

Here is something that I told my children today:

Stinging nettles:

Thora, myself and the boys ventured out recently along the back of the Highgate Road and over to the Cow Path for a little walk.

We specifically went along this path so that we could pick stinging nettles and the wild garlic growing up by the cow path.

Out of this, we were all going to make herbs, pesto, and Thora afterwards made a most delicious quiche out of spinach and nettles!

To pick the nettles, we had donned big gardening gloves to protect our fingers!

But nonetheless, the nettles still somehow managed to sting our fingers. It made an impression on the boys, that it wasn't easy to pluck this plant, and briefly there were even tears. We needed firm resolve to collect them.

The nettle grows up everywhere right now - it seems to be a very unwanted guest among us - and yet here it is, growing and proliferating into our world at an alarming rate (I'm sure by now you parents understand the metaphor!). Perhaps this nuisance plant wants to give us something, a gift of some sort - if we have the courage to grasp the nettle...

And so, as we sat there, eating our delicious nettle quiche that we all helped make and prepare, we had to think of how difficult it had been to pluck the nettle, what a sting it could give you. And yet now, we had taken it, transformed it, and it had been turned into something that could make us very strong and healthy.

I can tell you, the boys faces beamed at that!

(Some of you might see the connection between the nettle plant and its iron filled properties, and St Michael, who is the protagonist of the other end of the (Autumn) Equinox in September, and who shares a relationship to the angel Raphael, the healing angel associated with the Spring Equinox which fast approaches....)

In the meantime, I wish you all much strength, creativity and equanimity for this time.

I am sure that we will continue to keep our communities strong and become even stronger through this.

Luke Barr

Gospel Readings

Sunday, March 22 ... John 6:1-15

Sunday, March 29 ... John 8:1-12

Holy Week

Palm Sunday, April 5 ... Matthew 21:1-11

Thursday, April 9 ... Luke 23:13-32

Friday, April 10 ... John 19:1-15

Saturday, April 11 ... John 19:16-42

Easter

Sunday, April 12 ... Mark 16:1-8

Sunday, April 19 ... John 20:19-31

Sunday, April 26 ... John 10:1-16

Sunday, May 3 ... John 15:1-27

Sunday, May 10 ... John 16:1-33

Sunday, May 17 ... John 14:1-31

Ascension

Thursday, May 21 ... John 16:24-33

Sunday, May 24 ... John 16:24-33

Whitsun

Sunday, May 31 ... John 14:22-31

Wednesday, June 3 ... Romans 8:18-27

Sunday, June 7 ... Romans 8:18-27

Sunday, June 14 ... John 1:43-51

Sunday, June 21 ... John 3:1-21

St. John's Tide

Wednesday, June 24 ... Mark 1:1-11

Forest Row Congregation

Contact information

Please fill in the information you would like us to record

NAME

ADDRESS

Email **Phone**

Mobile

Please indicate ways in which you would like to be contacted

Phone Email Post

Please include me on the congregational telephone tree.

I understand that my phone number will be visible to others

Your signature

PRIVACY NOTICE

The Christian Community will only use information provided by you in the appropriate form. Information will not be shared with other organisations or individuals. Information will be held by the congregation priests and by the administrator / secretary.

Information will be used to contact you about programmes and events to be held in the congregation or nationally; to inform you about critical events in the life of the congregation; to inform you about the congregation's financial status and to make specific appeals as agreed by the finance group.

Please tell us if you move or change other contact details so that we may keep the information we hold up to date. You may tell us at any time if you would prefer that we no longer hold information.