Letter from Andy for 4th July 2020

Today is 4th July, Independence Day in America, it’s also ‘Super Saturday’ in the Lock-down easing process here in Britain, where pubs and restaurants are allowed to open.

This Sunday the Gospel reading ends with the sentence:

‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’

Too often I find that I keep my stresses and strains to myself, not sharing them with anyone, let alone Jesus.

Over the past few months as lock-down has continued, but also as it begins to ease into an uncertain and chaotic new reality, I have found myself feeling the weight of that uncertainty, the burden of whether to open the church for private prayer or public worship. The heavy yoke of leadership and continually trying to get the balance right so that as many different groups of people feel spiritually fed by the offerings we give is a constant concern. But I am not alone.

We all carry our own burdens and strain against the yokes society or we ourselves put upon us, whether that is with work, family or the decision to leave the safety of the house after months of isolating.

The statistics aren’t out yet, but anecdotally mental health has seriously struggled during lock-down. If that is you then Jesus’ words should speak directly to you. He wants to take on our burdens, he wants to lead us gently by the hand to a place of safety and peace.

The problem is, ‘How do we get there?’

One answer to that questions is ‘In community’. When we work together and share our burdens with each other honestly and openly in a community of love before God the king of all love, we are then more able to walk with each other on the way towards a place of peace.

Over the past few weeks the Benefice Council and the PCCs have reflected and will continue to reflect on where God is leading us over the coming months. The decisions won’t always sit well with everyone, but in all of this we are seeking to make the right choices in new and uncertain times, so please bear with us.

The other answer, of course, is ‘with Jesus by our sides’. Life is filled with stresses and strains, but when we work it out both in community with loved ones around us and with Jesus by our sides the decisions are not so weighty. Jesus has us in his arms and, as Julian of Norwich would say: ‘All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.’

Blessings.

Andy