

I should have been in Santiago this week welcoming and ministering to Pilgrims, but alas it is not to be and I join the queue seeking a refund from my airline - and Sybille remains shut away, with the possibility of an easing of restrictions after the weekend.

We continue in isolation and under the restraining restrictions in place in our various countries. Here in the UK, the media keeps suggesting an easing is on the way, and the government keep saying. 'be patient, it is not time yet'.

One initiative amongst our Chaplains is to offer a message such as this one on our social media outlets, and whilst I have offered a couple of late, someone else will be your Chaplain next week and so on through the season.

As I've been in touch with the Chaplains, it has been interesting to hear how they are and how and if they are succeeding, or even trying to stream services, and the response from their people. I find that one has Covid 19 (we pray for swift recovery), one is still planning his wedding in September (we pray that it will be able to go ahead with full ceremony and celebration) and one couple are looking to take on new ministry (we pray for success) - so please do pray for our chaplains.

So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. John 10.7

This Sunday's reading, always reminds me of a time back in my curacy when the Vicar decided to illustrate his sermon by moving some of the chairs in church into a square with one missing. He then had some of the children go into the 'sheepfold' that he had made and then lay down across the gap. The message of the gospel is clear but I missed the Vicar's actual take on it, being more concerned about his ability to stand up again without help!



The Black Mountains to the west of us and the Brecon Beacons beyond have many sheep grazing them, and they are currently being reoccupied as the lambing season comes to an end. We often wonder who owns which sheep, as

they seem to roam free; but this is not so in Portugal where we served for 7 years, (and probably in Spain).

There, there is no law of trespass and the sheep are herded, where they will, with the shepherd keeping a close eye on them. Indeed it was not unknown for us to see sheep grazing on a roundabout with cars and trucks whizzing by at close proximity.

But like the image Christ paints in his message today, the shepherd was always there too. Indeed I can recall one summer seeing an old mattress under a hedge with a rough tarpaulin in the branches over where the shepherd had set up camp for the season.

"Cristo es el camino", 'Christ is the way', and he leads us on the way through the gate into the green pasture. He calls us all by our own name, and like Mary Magdalene before us, on that first Easter morning, we recognise him as he speaks our name in a way that only he can - we recognise his voice amongst the hubbub.

So whether we are penned up with friends, or by ourselves in isolation, Christ calls our name and when he sees it safe to do so he will call and *"Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture"*, he will keep his promise, *"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."* John 10.9-10

A Time to pray

Post Communion Prayer for Easter 4

Merciful Father, you gave your Son Jesus Christ to be the good shepherd, and in his love for us to lay down his life and rise again: keep us always under his protection, and give us grace to follow in his steps; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Prayer in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic

- May we who are merely inconvenienced remember those whose lives are at stake.
- May we who have no risk factors remember those most vulnerable.

- May we who have the luxury of working from home remember those who must choose between preserving their health or paying their rent. - - May we who have the flexibility to care for our own children when their schools close remember those who have no options.
- May we who are at risk of losing our savings in the tumult of the economic market remember those who have no money at all.
- May we who settle in for isolation at home remember those who have no home.
- As doubt and worry grip our countries, let us choose love. During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other, let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbours. Amen.

You will have your own prayer list (ours seems to get longer each day - but please pray for:- Miriam, Matthew and Erin, Maria and Patrik - for the Camino and all who rely on it for their livelihood - for all who are ill with Covid 19 and with other ailments which may be being overlooked at this time of pandemic - for all in medical research and those who provide medical help and protective equipment - for the Church and our leaders, that we may soon be able to join for worship in our church buildings.

Please allow us to pray for - You, your family, your congregation, your exploration of new ways of ministry in difficult times - the things on your heart this day. May the Christ who defies the rules of social distancing walk closely with you, now and always.

God has called us to journey for a season through the wilderness places;
And so, as Jesus did before us, we will set out once more to wander in an uncomfortable landscape and wrestle with its challenges, that through the tempering action of the Spirit, we may emerge ready to do the work of the Kingdom.

Blessing

God the Father,
by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead
strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life
and the blessing of Almighty God
Father Son and Holy Spirit
Be with you as you continue your Camino- and for all time

Walk on in peace, to love and serve the Lord
In the Name of Christ, Amen, Alleluia!

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