



Bro Cybi Ministry Area

Sunday the 5th of April 2020

Dear friends,

Grace and peace be with you from our Lord Jesus Christ +

I hope you are keeping as well as can be in these difficult and challenging times. We are in Holy Week and so many of us are missing being together in our Churches. Last week I went into St Cybi's and also in to St Gwenfaen's briefly to collect my robes and St Cybi's was warm, well warm—er anyway ! The irony is that whilst we have been away the gas supply has been repaired and the heating is now working, ready for our return. It is now on very low just to keep the building aired. Raymond has done a wonderful job ensuring that gas fitters could access the Church and complete their work. The Church was so quiet and peaceful. It was a joy to be there if only for a short time but my visit was also tinged with sadness, seeing the Easter candle ready for this Sunday, in the vestry where it will lay unused probably for several months. The present building work at St Cybis is now completed, Chris Medley has done a wonderful job arranging everything for the builders. And I know that many others have been working hard to ensure that all our Churches are maintained and kept safe for us. I have been so encouraged and reminded that our Churches are ready for our return, when that time comes. And we will have such a good time being together again.

My time has been spent trying to keep in touch with people by telephone and also preparing the enclosed reflections and writings for Holy Week and Easter. I hope at least that you will be able to journey through this very special week with me, through the writings and also through any online or televised reflections and services you are able to see. I have also been doing funerals, sadly these are the only services we can do at the moment. Although these are now often even more difficult services than normal. The restrictions on numbers at gravesides and in the crematorium mean that families and mourners can now have only fifteen minutes to say goodbye to their loved ones. This is often hugely traumatic for them, please continue to pray for the bereaved families in our community; they need so much loving care at the moment.

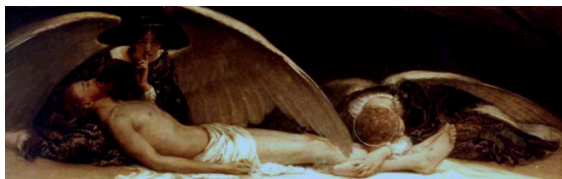
As I have pondered on our current situation, I have reflected on the experiences of two communities in our history. Firstly, the community of Israel in exile in Babylon. They were taken away from their homeland and forced to live in a far away country. I imagine the character of the prophet Daniel, in exile in Babylon, yearning to be back home, he is sitting on a windowsill looking through an open window towards Jerusalem, remembering his homeland and wondering how long his wait will be, he is always hoping to be home soon. Many of the writings in our Old Testament were put together during the Babylonian exile; it was a time of great creativity and reflection. When our world is turned upside down and when we can take nothing for granted, we are called to pray and to be open to things never being quite the same again. We look to the things which we value mostly, those things we love and cherish and we thank God for them. And we can also allow ourselves to be formed anew; even stronger than before . We are called to wait on God, to yearn for our homecoming and also to wait on God for what he will reveal to us as his plan for our future. I have no doubt that our Churches will emerge from this difficult time even stronger. The Church has survived now for nearly two thousand years, our Churches has been a constant presence of the Gospel in our communities for over a thousand years and they will continue to be so. Yes, the Church has changed, as it should, but Christians have kept the flame of the Gospel alive and alight through very tough and challenging times and we will do this again.

The second community I have remembered is the Christian community in the Middle East, where it all began, in what is now called Palestine; the Holy Land. I have Christian friends in Bethlehem who have been prevented from visiting the Churches and their communities in Jerusalem for over twenty years now. This has been due to the security situation there and the restrictions placed on them by the authorities in Israel. They are living in exile. Their resilience, their courage and their hope of return has inspired me for many years. Their hope and determination is undiminished even though they cannot see when they will be able to worship again in their Churches.

Our situation, although difficult, will be much easier and much shorter I hope. We are in Lent and now in Holy Week. To some of us it feels as though we are already living in Good Friday, where despair threatens to consume us. But Sunday is not far away now. On Sunday we celebrate new life and new hope and although we are apart I think we are going to have a good and happy Easter.

My favourite image for the yearning and waiting we experience on Easter Saturday is this painting, by an artist unknown to me.

On Easter Saturday we know that death has come and we know, because of our tradition, that Hope is also not far away. And we can be impatient, we may want to move through Easter Saturday without stopping. But the waiting is important, we are urged always to wait on God.



I love in particular the image of the angel with her finger over her lips. Shhhhhh she says, do not wake him, it is not yet time; wait. And her wings, so broad and gentle yet over-arching; offering us the shelter we need as we wait. Protecting our Lord's seemingly lifeless body from harm. We too can wait under the shadow of her wings, resting, waiting and also expecting. Here are some words from Psalm 57:

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,
for in you my soul takes refuge;
in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
until the destroying storms pass by.

With prayers and blessings, I hope you have a wonderful Easter.

Reverend Rob Wardle

Bro Cybi Ministry Area Leader