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Newsletter of All Saints' Anglican Church, Via del Babuino 153.

March 29th 2020: The Fifth Sunday of Lent

Here are some reflections contributed by our Intern Ksenia Smykova to Faithineurope.net.

We are one body

'And when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it.' (*1 Corinthians, 12.26*)

One of the most popular words of the month in Italy, for sure, is 'quarantine'. It comes from the Latin word *Quadragesima*, forty. In the Middle Ages the word had a more military connotation. It referred to the income deriving from feudal land tenure, which the tenant of the land was obliged to pay to the landlord, assuming a certain military office. The number forty is also symbolic in Scripture. One can imagine how the collective Christian consciousness did not take long to draw a parallel between the forty days Christ spent in the Judean desert and the forty-days of service, hence the name.

In many Eastern Churches, specifically requested commemorations or petitions are often turned into a series of forty consecutive liturgies. Lent is forty days long. The Christian word *Quadragesima* is omnipresent. No wonder people, suspected of being contagious, were also isolated from society, in one way or another, for forty days – and that gives us the present-day use of the term.

The number forty brings before us a range of biblical and cultural associations. It is therefore very symbolic to stay in quarantine in such a prominent center of Christianity such as Rome, precisely during the *Quaresima* (Italian for 'Lent'). I couldn't help but to express this myself on Facebook soon after Italy went into shut down – this Lent is becoming a real desert. Of course, I was not alone in this association. Many similar thoughts appeared on the newsfeed. The parallel with Lent is so bluntly black-on-white obvious, that naturally it seems like we are living within a moralistic sermon.

If this pandemic was indeed to be an illustration to a homily, what would the preacher's main idea be?

The very nature of the virus tells us that we are interconnected in ways that are not always evident or visible but which are nonetheless real. Breaking or disturbing that connection makes us feel very, very uncomfortable.

We are now living in a science fiction. Millions of people simultaneously confined to their homes, deprived of socialization. For the first time in our lives, we have no right to move. Everything is upside down. Everybody is tired. As of now, only two weeks have passed and people are already changing in their behavior, level of tolerance, attitude towards each other. Those who are confined with their families face different problems than those who live alone or those who, due to the nature of their work, have to continue getting on the empty bus and driving through the empty streets every day.



The virus attacks our mental and emotional health more forcefully than it attacks the lower respiratory tract. Probably, what makes the situation worse is that people cannot make any sense of it. Trying to make sense of things is proper to human nature. It is

the way our intellect works – it needs to find causes. *Why* did this happen? Who is responsible for this? Whom shall we accuse? The lack of answers often leads people to one of our favorite genres – the conspiracy folklore. It must be the Chinese government... No, no – it is Russia! If not the US. Unless it is a universal Masonic plot, of course.

The sub-genre of that is what I would define as apocalyptic conspiracies. 'It must be the beginning of the end – no, it isn't, but God wants us to realize that... (insert whatever best fits your theology)'. A friend from a Muslim country told me today that his compatriots are sure the pandemic is a blessing from God because people can't go out to the pub.

Personally, I doubt any of these have any connection with reality. Perhaps they do, but more likely not. What I *am* sure of is that we cannot utter judgement on behalf of God. The only conclusion we can make so far is quite evident and was already pronounced by the Gospel – we are one body. If a member gets sick, the whole body suffers. If in the future I will get to preach on 1 Corinthians 12.26, I will start by calling to mind the spring of 2020.

Today is the first Sunday of Passiontide, in the Christian liturgical year the name for the last two weeks of Lent, beginning on the Fifth Sunday of Lent, long celebrated as Passion Sunday, and ending on Holy Saturday.

For our online service, Mass in a Tin, please visit our website:

<http://bobsprospect.blogspot.com/2020/03/all-saints-anglican-church-in-city-of.html?m=1>

For a commentary on today's readings please visit our Blog:

<https://www.allsaintsrome.org/post/5th-sunday-of-lent-readings-and-commentary>

To accompany our online service, which is ingeniously including various musical contributions, the opening hymn originally planned was "O dearest Lord, thy sacred head with thorns was pierced for me." The words are by "Father Andrew", whose real name was Henry Hardy, and this hymn has been set to numerous tunes, and today it is the one by Vincent Novello: here is a performance by Guidford Cathedral Choir: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_KZ24JFTtPw

Our gradual hymn today is "Here is love, vast as the ocean". There are many solo versions of this hymn, but here is one by the Swansea Male Voice Choir:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zu8E5NrN--Y>

However here is a version in the original Welsh sung by a Welsh congregation to a different tune. The Welsh words are on the screen and even if we don't understand them, the powerful singing is irresistible!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nc2s_SiwKP0

Our offertory hymn is "Glory be to Jesus", whose words are based on the Italian "Viva, viva Gesù". Here is a rather pleasant performance from Colorado:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgJ_GjsLci4

And finally the stirring hymn "We sing the praise of him who died". The author was Thomas Kelly B.A., son of Thomas Kelly, a Judge of the Irish Court of Common Pleas, born in Dublin, July 13, 1769, and educated at Trinity College, Dublin. He was designed for the Bar, and entered the Temple, London, with that intention; but having undergone a very marked spiritual change he took Holy Orders in 1792. His earnest evangelical preaching in Dublin led Archbishop Fowler to inhibit him and his companion preacher, Rowland Hill, from preaching in the city. For some time he preached in two unconsecrated buildings in Dublin, Plunket Street, and the Bethesda, and then, having seceded from the Established Church, he erected places of worship at Athy, Portarlinton, Wexford, &c, in which he conducted divine worship and preached. He died May 14, 1854. Miller, in his *Singers & Songs of the Church*, 1869, p. 338 (from which some of the foregoing details are taken), says:—

"Mr. Kelly was a man of great and varied learning, skilled in the Oriental tongues, and an excellent Bible critic. He was possessed also of musical talent, and composed and published a work that was received with favour, consisting of music adapted to every form of metre in his hymn-book.

Naturally of an amiable disposition and thorough in his Christian piety, Mr. Kelly became the friend of good men, and the advocate of every worthy, benevolent, and religious cause. He was admired alike for his zeal and his humility; and his liberality found ample scope in Ireland, especially during the year of famine."

He wrote over 700 hymns, including "The head that once was crowned with thorns". Here is today's hymn performed by the choir of Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral.

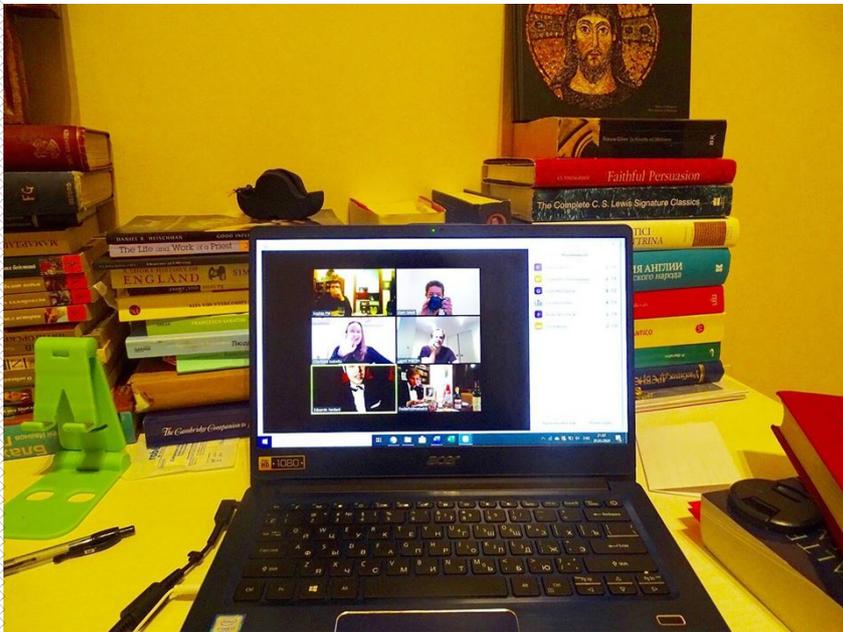
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYvOvHOw5Eg>

On March 25th we celebrated the Feast of the Annunciation. Here is a representation by the Dutch artist Salomon Koninck and below two astonishing anonymous icons from Macedonia that were displayed in an exhibition in the Vatican in 1986.



News from All Saints'

- The planned Annual General Meeting due today will not of course take place. Reports on the church's various sectors and activities have been received and as the situation evolves we will let you know current and future steps to inform you as to this event will be handled.



- A number of our young adults are currently spread around the world as a result of the Coronavirus, but they and Ksenia have been keeping in touch with each other!

- There is a weekly programme on RAI television called "Protestantesimo", and during our last service on March 8th they sent a camera crew to film the service and interview parishioners as part of a programme on Brexit. Here it is,

and we feature during the last five minutes. You will see some familiar faces!

<https://www.raisplay.it/video/2020/03/Protestantesimo--892c355b-c864-42dc-8b54-b7e46ab303e8.html>

- Our little church choir is missing the opportunity of singing together but we are keeping in touch! Jane is cooking, doing jigsaws and following Light at Lunchtime on Whatsapp. Ruth and Aiden are working from home, Ruth teaching online and Aiden, who is the British vice-consul, keeping track of problem areas, such as British nationals stranded on cruise ships in Italian waters. Daphne and Andrew are reading, listening to music, cooking, surfing, talking on the phone and...cleaning. Hureem is fine at home and Patricia sends love and prayers to everyone. We can't wait to get back to the choir stalls!
- In this week's "Church Times" there is an extended feature on how Anglican churches in Italy are coping with the shutdown. It includes interviews with all the vicars in Italy and is a faithful picture of what we are all witnessing first hand. It is too long to include here (and is anyway protected by copyright) but you can find the full text at <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/27-march/news/world/the-silence-is-quiet-absolute-no-sounds-of-traffic-no-voices-no-footsteps-not-even-a-dog-barking>.

If you are not able to access this address directly because you do not have a subscription to the “Church Times” you can still read it by going onto the church’s webpage.

- This past Thursday, March 26th, we would have had Choral Evensong, with the All Saints’ Evensong quintet, Sarah Clayton (soprano), Eric Foster (alto), Freddie Frostwick (tenor and organist) and Andrew Cochlin (bass). Sadly we can’t get together for this, but you can hear musical settings suitable for a group like ours here:

Preces and responses (Radcliffe):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOY4vcjSQJw>

Canticles (Riley): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DlgSmmzUL1I>

The psalm appointed for the evening was 121, sung here in the setting by Walford Davies by the choir of Westminster Abbey:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inHrXDMaI4g>

- Today’s newsletter was introduced by an article by Ksenia, one of our interns. Our other Intern Edoardo Fanfani has also been busy, and you can read his thoughts on these difficult times on the Roman Anglican Facebook blog: <https://romananglican.blogspot.com/2020/03/a-brighter-dawn-reflection-during.html>

Where are they now?



- Many of you will remember with affection Father **Sebastian Matapally**, and his wife Alida: he spent quite a lengthy period as locum at All Saints’. After spending some time at St Michael’s in Eastbourne he is now vicar of St John the Baptist in Scampton, a village in Lincolnshire. The church does not only serve the parish but is also an RAF Heritage Centre.

- Father **John Kilgore** was our last locum, and he is now at St George’s Anglican Episcopal Church in Madrid. Here he is,

bottom left, with some familiar faces, at the El Escorial service, held in the Monasterio del Prestado.



From Philippa Hitchen

Our Church Warden, Philippa, has been less physically present at All Saints this year since she has changed jobs and moved into a new house in Buckinghamshire, from where she works remotely as Communications Officer for the Lutheran World Federation.

Suddenly, as the corona virus has led to lockdowns in countries around the world, people have been increasingly asked to work from home, doing the same jobs but from their living rooms, spare bedrooms or kitchen worktops, in order to respect the self-isolation rules. To many, this posed huge challenges – to me, it made no difference at all, since I have been doing just that for almost a year now. After spending three decades working at Vatican Radio, I had decided it was time to move on. My youngest daughter was away at university in The Hague, my other two children were living and working in Spain and the UK and my husband had recently retired. After the death of my parents, my sister and I had sold the family house in Epsom and I was looking for a smaller place somewhere in the south of England which I could continue to call ‘home’.

As an Anglican working within the Vatican walls for all that time, I had increasingly found myself reporting on ecumenical and interfaith relations, interviewing leaders from many different churches and learning about the history of their dialogues with the Catholic Church. It was something I felt passionate about and was thrilled when I was offered a job in the communications department of the World Council of Churches – a kind of United Nations for the Christian world, working to strengthen relations between Protestants, Orthodox, Catholics, and increasingly the Pentecostal and Evangelical churches too.

Pope Francis was preparing to visit the Geneva headquarters of the WCC and I was asked to share my experience of the Vatican, facilitating contacts and writing stories about ecumenism for their website, newsletters and podcasts – you can listen to a few of those interviews here <https://soundcloud.com/wccradio01>

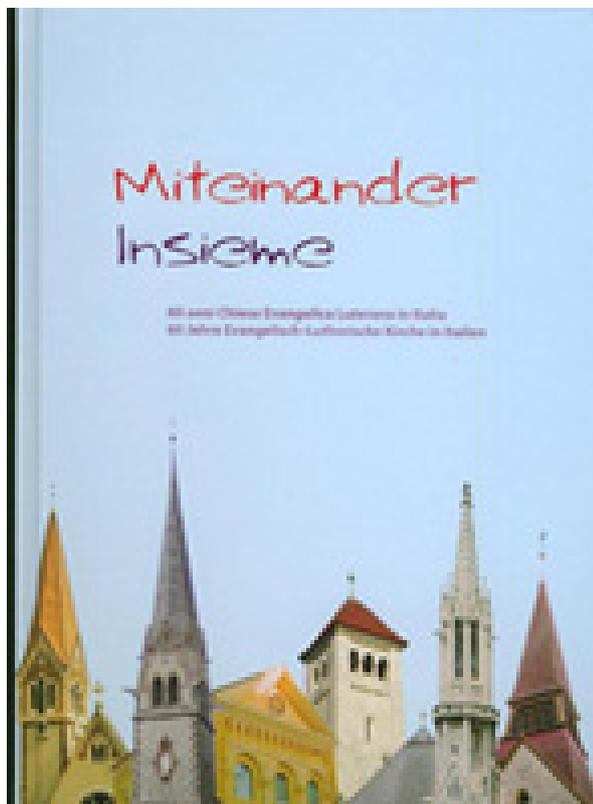
It was a great job but a temporary one and after four months I was again looking around for new opportunities – which I found in the same Ecumenical Centre in Geneva that is home to a variety of different Christian charities and organisations. (You can find out about the history of the WCC and take a virtual tour of the Centre and its beautiful chapel here

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/get-involved/visits-to-the-wcc>) Across the corridor from the WCC is the headquarters of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), an organisation which brings together 148 Lutheran churches in countries around the world. I had already worked with their leaders and communications department when Pope Francis travelled to Sweden to hold a joint commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and was happy to be offered a job with them – even though it meant moving from Rome to Geneva. I packed a couple of suitcases, rented a small studio flat from them and started work in my new office, with breath-taking views of Mont Blanc on one side and the Jura mountains on the other.

In the meantime, I had bought a house in the small Buckinghamshire village of Bourne End where my sister was living, and was wanting to spend time there, sorting out and settling in. Last summer, therefore, I asked if I could continue doing the same communications job with the LWF but based in the UK rather than at the Geneva headquarters. They agreed, and I exchanged my Swiss mountain views for the living room of my new house, located beside the River Thames, looking out onto a lovely garden with a small stream running through it.

I'm still doing interviews and writing stories about the work of the churches in different parts of the world. As well as ecumenical relations, I do a lot of work about gender equality and the role of the church in combatting violence against women and girls (an area I also focused on in the Vatican but with huge challenges, given the lack of women in leadership within the Catholic hierarchy!) You can read some of those stories from the LWF website here

<https://www.lutheranworld.org/news>



Over the past months, I travelled regularly to Geneva, as well as to other countries including the US, Malaysia, Indonesia and Poland to follow conferences and report on Lutheran church activities in contexts where they are often a very tiny minority. Like other Christian churches in Muslim, Buddhist or Hindu majority countries, they are often small in number but influential and well respected for the humanitarian work they do through hospitals, health centres, schools or other social services that are open to people of all faiths and none.

Like the Catholic Church under Pope Francis (<https://migrants-refugees.va>), the LWF has a strong focus on supporting refugees, migrants and all people displaced by wars, poverty, violence and oppression. Its World Service Department (not to be confused with the BBC!) works closely with the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees, providing vital services in refugee camps, as well as working

to promote peace and reconciliation in warzones or post-conflict countries. You can find out more about their work here <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/about-dws>

So when the corona virus struck and the rest of my colleagues in Geneva were asked to self-isolate and set up office at home for the foreseeable future, I was able to reassure them and offer a few practical tips about managing work from home. The big advantages, for me, are the lack of time lost (and stress accumulated!) commuting and waiting for trains or searching for non-existent parking spots. It's easier to achieve a better life-work balance and the flexibility is especially suited for those trying to juggle the demands of younger families or caring for elderly relatives.

I miss the physical presence and camaraderie of my colleagues, sharing meals and tea-times together but, as many people are discovering, it is possible to maintain your social life online too. I have never been very good with technology (ask any of my children!) but I have learnt how to use it (or ask someone to explain how to use it) to share documents, have conversations and video conferences with colleagues and friends. At a time when all our churches are also learning how to offer worship resources and find other ways of creating community online, I hope you are all able to follow All Saints website (<https://www.allsaintsrome.org/home-1>), Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/allsaintschurchrome/>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/AllSaintsRome>), or Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/allsaintsrome/>) so that we can continue to pray, chat, share and support each other virtually until, God willing, we meet together again in Rome.

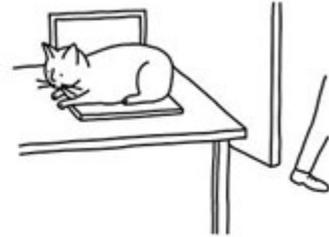
LIVESTREAMING THE SERVICE



THE DIRECTOR'S CUT



OPENING CREDITS



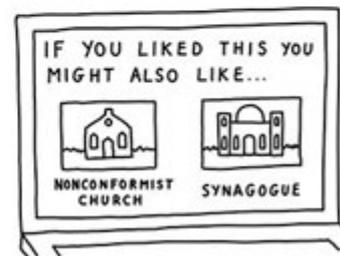
INTERVAL



A BIT OF SHUT-EYE



THE REALISATION
THAT THIS WAS LAST
WEEK'S EPISODE



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
FUTURE VIEWING

With acknowledgements to the "Church Times". As a regular subscriber to the newspaper I should apologise for any breach of copyright, but these are difficult times in Italy and a one-off inclusion of this cartoon contributes to raising the morale of the congregation!



**DID YOU TURN
THE CLOCKS
FORWARD THIS
MORNING?**

Finally, the Ecumenical garden at San Gregorio al Celio is currently closed because of the current crisis, but here are some reminders of it as an oasis of peace.

