

Holy Week and Easter 2020

But if there is no resurrection from the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. But, in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that slept.

1 Corinthians 15:13-14, 20

Dear Friends in Christ;

I pray that you are all well and safe as we live through these very different days.

For many of us, the new restrictions on social and commercial activities are mostly an inconvenience, challenging us to create new ways to connect with family and friends, to secure the food and medication which we need for good health, and to find different things to fill our time.

But for some, the new realities are creating very real economic hardship as people face layoffs and significant loss of income.

For others, the pressure of changed economic and social patterns is increasing the threat of physical and emotional abuse. Many homes are not the safe places that they should be; the safe places that we pray they might be.

And, of course, the virus itself represents a very real threat to us and to those whom we love. While the number of those who have been infected here in New Brunswick remains relatively low, the experts tell us that those numbers will rise, all the more so if we're not successful at using physical distancing to 'flatten the curve'. So many of us are genuinely concerned about what the next few weeks and months are going to look like.

In such a time as this, I trust that you are joining with Christians around the world to pray for those who are facing personal, financial, and social health concerns. And I especially hope that we're praying for those who are working right now to care for the sick and to keep our essential services open. Our medical professionals and hospital and nursing home staff are facing the threat of this virus every day, as are those who are working in our grocery stores and pharmacies. They are the heroes of this story and we need to let them know that we're upholding them in prayer and that we are deeply grateful for their work.

In the face of all the very real threats and concerns that surround us, we should not lose sight of the fact that we are in the midst of Holy Week as we journey towards Easter. As St. Paul reminds us in the passage of Holy Scripture quoted above, the Resurrection of Christ is the ground for all of our hope. It is the clearest possible sign that God has both the will and the power to keep us safe. The Resurrection shows us the kind of love that He has for us; a love which willingly reaches out to us in the life of His Son and welcomes us into His loving arms; a love which is willing to carry any burden for us, even the burden of suffering and death, so that we might not have to do it alone. To live in the Resurrection is to live in hope; to live each day, and encounter whatever each day throws at us, without losing hope.

Living in the Risen Christ does not mean that we will be spared the reality of life's challenges. Christians will face all the many difficult moments that are an unavoidable part of life in a broken world. But living in Christ does mean that we need not be defeated by any of it. Knowing that even death could not hold Christ shows us that nothing in life has the power to hold us, as long as we seek to live in Christ.

In a very different way this year, we will be walking each and every day of Holy Week, walking some of the steps of that road that Christ walked that we might always have hope. This year we'll not be able to go to **a** Church, but that makes us no less able to be **the** Church. As someone shared with me this week, the building is closed but the Church is open.

I'll be posting something every day through Holy Week, so I invite you to join us on the Parish Youtube channel and, if you're on Facebook, the Parish Facebook page (information below). Each day this week we will hear the words of the Gospels as they tell us of Christ's courage and sacrifice; of His Passion. On Palm Sunday we greeted Him joyfully as King as he entered Jerusalem, but we also called for His crucifixion when Pilate offered to release Him. We will break bread with Him as He gathers in the Upper Room with His closest friends. We will witness His death on the Cross and we will wait with the disciples in the darkness of fear and despair.

We will do this to remind ourselves in word and deed of what Christ has overcome on our behalf; to remind ourselves of the power of the Resurrection; the power of God to overcome whatever challenges we face. You are invited to join us prayerfully and digitally as we take this journey. You are invited to use this one week to make a real difference in how you live the rest of the year; to allow hope to overcome despair and faith to overcome fear.

In the Life and Power of the Risen Christ,



Fr. Kevin M. Stockall,
Priest and Rector

Staying connected with St. Mary's during COVID-19:

- Please go to the Parish Youtube Channel by going to **youtube.com** and searching for "St. Mary's Anglican Church, Fredericton". Once you get to our channel page, you'll be able to find a listing of all the videos that we've uploaded; and you'll more easily find out what we're posting by clicking the link to subscribe to the channel (a free subscription).
- If you're on Facebook, go the **facebook.com** and search for "Anglican Parish of St. Mary – York". If you like and follow the page, you'll be able to get back to the page more easily in the future.



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