

“Our Shared Vulnerability; thoughts on Coronavirus”

Radio Devon, Sunday, 5th April 2020.

I have often thought that shared vulnerability unites us more than shared strength. This is certainly so during this pandemic. We are all either infected or affected. Of that there is no doubt.

We're all more aware of our own mortality. We all worry for elderly relatives or the medically compromised in our families. We find it hard not to be physically in the company of our friends and those we love. The tender care of the great band of carers is something we celebrate and cheer for, as if they were sports heroes or famous celebrities. And rightly so.

Walking on the street for exercise or queuing for essential shopping, we all feel rather awkward as we observe the social distancing that is necessary. Stepping into the street, to keep the required two meters apart, we discover strangers smiling as we greet one another.

I hope some of this isn't lost when we eventually come through this crisis. There is a shared solidarity, a recognition of our common humanity that highlights the best of us.

We are entering the most important week of the year, at least for Christians. A time when we remember that God entered fully into our human vulnerability. In Jesus, He knew what it was to shed tears for a loved one who had died. He experienced the agony of not knowing how it was all going to turn out. He was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a Cross.

This is the source of our hope. No longer is weakness shameful or tenderness to be scorned. Shared vulnerability is not something to be afraid of. It is but one step, which opens up new possibilities. The promise of a new beginning, a new life. Let us take the risk to be vulnerable before one another. After all, God did.....

+Mark O'Toole
Bishop of Plymouth