

Tuesday Reflection 19th May 2020

As I sit down to write this morning's reflection, a wealth of potential topics present themselves. The Mass Readings continue the story of the early Church in Acts and St John's account of Jesus' farewell discourse; today we celebrate the memory of that great churchman St Dunstan, who, as Archbishop of Canterbury did so much to build up the Church in England. And then this week we are celebrating the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* - on care for our common home.

Each of these topics would merit a reflection of their own. On closer reflection, however, all of them can be viewed under the headings of Community and Solidarity.

The Acts of the Apostles recount how the early Church gradually evolved as a community - or a community of communities. Our Lord's great exhortation to his followers that we should "Love one another" is a call to community and solidarity. In his encyclical, Pope Francis calls us to care for our common home and to remember the vital necessity of acting in solidarity with the whole of Creation.

If we look at our situation today, faced with the threat of Covid 19 and contending with lockdown and social distancing, we are confronted on the one hand with our vulnerability and impotence, but on the other are called to greater inventiveness and creativity.

In the Church generally, and in our Parish in particular, we are rising to the challenges and grasping the opportunities presented by the current situation. Over the past weeks, Francesca and I have attended services in France, Germany, Oxford and Clifton and have taken the opportunity to engage with members of other faith communities.

In our Parish, a tighter community is being built using FaceBook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Zoom and the Parish website; people are perhaps now praying together more intensely than was hitherto the case. The fact that members of the Parish Community are invited to contribute to these daily reflections shows a widening and decentralisation of responsibility within the Parish.

All these things demonstrate an indomitable desire for community and a deepening of faith as we become ever more aware of the fact that being a Catholic means turning away from an ego-driven individualism and celebrating community.

Michael Townson.