

## FEAR AND THE MESSAGE OF EASTER

President Franklin Roosevelt once said that the ' only thing to Fear is Fear itself '. He said this during his first inaugural address in January 1933 at a time when the great depression had reached its depth and there was great hardship everywhere. It was later that month that Adolf Hitler became Chancellor in Germany and in a few short years the world was plunged into the nightmare of World War 2. Roosevelt's words certainly ring true about the power of fear to affect us all in ways we find hard to predict. Fear can so easily lead to a kind of paralysis. The present crisis over covid19 at the time of writing this article (March 10th) has already had an effect within our country and in the wider world. How should we respond?

What practical difference can I make?

First of all, surely, we should think how we can protect and support our neighbours. Much of the public rhetoric is in danger of sowing fear about the danger of other people. We must take all the sensible precautions but also surely, we must offer help and reassurance to others and not demonise anyone or any group. We need to think about those who may be suffering more than me. If we are healthy there is much less to worry about but the elderly, the housebound and those with chronic health conditions may be very fearful. We must keep our eyes open to those who may be affected in this way. We may be unsure about visiting but a phone call? Just a word of reassurance can be so helpful. A friendly voice can offer real comfort when someone is worried and fearful.

We've all heard reports of panic buying and hoarding. Let's not give into fear and do this! There is plenty of food to go around we just need to make a decision not to hoard. If our neighbours are in trouble ask, then what they need and do your best to help them get it.

The virus has reminded us very powerfully of our fragility and mortality - something we often avoid thinking about or even attempt to deny. We need to live today to the full. None of us know what the future has in store. Jesus challenged his followers to live today to the full and not be afraid. In the last meal he shared with them the night before he died, he said to them these remarkable words

**' Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. '**

In a culture which increasingly seems full of fear about the future the Easter faith speaks of a God who knows our fears , our insecurities - who meets us in Jesus Christ and asks us to be people who meet fear with his love . As we read in the pages of the New Testament

**' There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear'**

With every blessing for a peaceful and joy filled Easter

Ross