

Good habits....

As we come to the end of Holy Week, we are entering into what is the third week of lockdown. For many the novelty is wearing off. We have gotten over panic buying. And we are coming to realize slowly that we can do things in a different way. However the restrictions are beginning to chafe as we face endless weeks ahead in a state of limbo, waiting to go back to normal.

New patterns of behaviour have grown out of our enforced confinement. I am certainly exercising more. In the Vicarage there is a newly found interest in cleaning and tidying up, no doubt driven by boredom. Tasks overlooked and jobs which have been previously abandoned are now being done with enthusiasm. Many are discovering many gifts and talents or working to learn new skills, and I would encourage our young people especially to do so. We have nearly finished setting up means for you to communicate with each other and shall go live once all the necessary consents are in place, so you can exchange ideas and let each other know what you are doing.

We must not forget that for many others confinement has had devastating consequences – there has been a marked increase in domestic abuse and violence. The current situation means that there is a lack of support and resources and we should remember all who are suffering in prayer.

There are, though, many good things to share. This time has been a time of listening more and building relationships. Most important of which is our relationship with God. A number of us at All Saints, who attend the online Wednesday fellowship (please join us if you can) have said they are spending more time in the Word of God, and in and prayer.

But I wonder, when the time comes when we can go out, and have a million other things to do will we still spend as much time as we have waiting on God?

I have read many times Jesus' invitation in **Matt 11:28-30**

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

I feel deeply attracted to this but somehow due to bad habits frequently walk not bearing Jesus' easy yoke and light burden - but carrying instead the heavy burdens of the world. As lockdown has forced a change to my normal patterns, I have thought that now is time to give up the bad habits that lead to this and take this His invitation properly.

I'm sure you too have thought of many things that will change. And yes, we tell ourselves, all these new good things will carry on when things get back to 'normal'. But how do we ensure that this happens?

This is the time to embed what is positive and establish new ways of doing things. Now is the time to break from old patterns and habits (like squeezing in time to pray around all our other commitments because feel we have to rather than making it our first priority, a thing many struggle with!) There are also bad habits to break and new ones to develop in other areas of our lives, including our attitudes and responses and our physical health.

Practical steps? As we try to develop and build up good habits, I offer the following thoughts.

In **Romans 12 v9-18** there is a really helpful list of good habits which we can bury deep in our hearts. *“Love must be sincere”,* it says, highlighting the fact that love should underpin all we do. *“Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone....”*

Let us ask for the help of Holy Spirit as we strive to do these things.

As for the physical good habits - I have attached a short clip of some simple exercises we can do at home.

As we prepare for Easter in a completely different way let us seize the chance for radical change and transformation in our lives by developing good habits.

Blessings

Ade