

## Reflection Monday 18 May 2020

I think many people will have experienced a range of emotions through this Pandemic, from fear and anxiety to pleasure at an old friend or family member getting in touch and maybe relief that, as yet, we haven't had the virus.

A personal experience of mine has been great anxiety about a family member whom I couldn't help and sorrow for the other family members also badly affected. It came to me in the night that this must be how God feels when he sees us hurting ourselves through our own choices and yet he cannot intervene unless we invite him in. How can we personally cope with these kinds of situations? I have found sharing with others and praying is a great help. To be honest, in my anxiety I have often been unable to focus my prayers but knowing others are praying with you is invaluable. And very encouragingly I have seen some amazing answers to prayer, both in the past and now. When things challenge me and I am not sure how I will manage, in time, God has given me inner strength and true peace of mind through which I have begun to cope again.

'How to Pray When Life Hurts' is the title of a book I have been reading. Its content sounds rather heavy but it has some really enlightening ideas. One thing which made me think was that if we let him, God will do the work in our praying – it doesn't depend on how hard we strive for our prayers to be answered. Another thing which encouraged me was in the chapter 'How do we pray when we are anxious or fearful'. The author, Roy Lawrence, described how a lady, who was in an incurable state of anxiety, was given twenty-two texts by a Christian friend about the love of God. Her friend asked her to read them morning and evening every day, very slowly and prayerfully, letting them soak into her, for as long as it took to make a difference. The lady, called Meryl, agreed to do so and very gradually something started to happen. Over six months a miracle took place - Meryl became completely healed. She was able to return to work and, as a GP, started to help others again herself. Here are those life changing texts:

***Do not fear, for I have redeemed you (Isaiah 43:1)***

***I am with you (Isaiah 43:5)***

***And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20)***

***Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me (John 14:1)***

***I will help you (Isaiah 41:14)***

***When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned (Isaiah 43:2)***

***Do not be afraid (Luke 12:7)***

***Even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid (Matthew 10:30)***

***The mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed (Isaiah 54:10)***

***Come, my beloved (Song of Songs 7:11)***

***I will take you ... in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will take you ... in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord (Hosea 2:19-20)***

***I AM WHO I AM (Exodus 3:14)***

***I am the Lord your God (Exodus 20:2)***

***As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you (John 15:9)***

***I have called you by name, you are mine (Isaiah 43:1)***

***Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you (Jeremiah 1:5)***

***You did not choose me, but I chose you (John 15:16)***

***You are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you (Isaiah 43:4)***

***I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have continued my faithfulness to you (Jeremiah 31:3)***

***How can I give you up? ..... My compassion grows warm and tender (Hosea 11:8)***

***Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. See I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands (Isaiah 49:15-16)***

***For I, the Lord your God, hold you by the right hand (Isaiah 41:13)***

I hope these texts uplift you too. God loves us and meets us in our place of need whatever the cost to him. And nothing can separate us from his love (Romans 8:38-39) – how amazing is that!

To end, I will share a couple of lovely things we saw while out walking recently at Lynford Arboretum. As I went to cross the bridge across a stretch of water there was a flurry of ducklings which, on hearing me approach, had dashed away. I then spotted a swan sitting high on her nest – how healing is God's wonderful creation!

