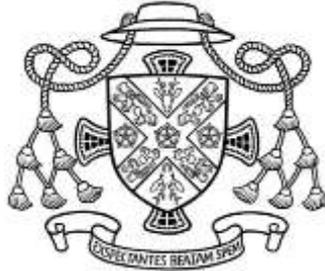


Pastoral Letter
Of
Terence Patrick Drainey



Bishop of Middlesbrough

18.03.2020

We pray for ourselves and our world under the threat of the coronavirus pandemic, that the Almighty and Merciful Lord look with compassion on our afflictions and so lighten our burdens and confirm our faith that we may always trust without hesitation in his providential love. Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit and is God for ever and ever. Amen

Lent is certainly a time of mortification and fasting, but, in the light of the instructions which I have just brought to your attention, I never thought that it would be a fast from our daily and weekly Eucharistic celebrations and the comfort that these bring us.

Without over-dramatizing the situation, perhaps we are tempted with Jesus on the cross to cry out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” For some of us this is how it might feel. As God’s people we are certainly being invited to join our inconvenience, our pain and sickness, our suffering to those of the Lord.

However, we can’t take Jesus cry from the Cross out of the context of the whole of the psalm from which he quotes. Neither is Jesus’ prayer nor the psalm (22) one of despair; rather it is a song of praise and trust in God’s providence for his people. The psalm ends on a very upbeat and joyful note:

All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
will bow down before him,
future generations will be told about the Lord.
They will proclaim his righteousness,
declaring to a people yet unborn:
He has done it! (Psalm 22)

So, as we face this difficult time we do so with hope and trust that the Lord will indeed save us and lift us up. To Him be glory and praise for ever more. Amen.

Yours in blessed hope,

+ Terry