

From where I am sitting all I can see is the wonderful rolling countryside, the sheep with their lambs, the ducks on the pond with their gorgeously cute brood of ducklings. It is a scene that has not changed for centuries.

And yet, as we approach Easter, the most holy part of the Christian calendar, it doesn't feel like any Easter that any of us have known before. The whole world has changed in a matter of a few short weeks. New words and phrases such as "lockdown", social distancing" and "self -isolation" are now part of our everyday language. We have not been able to take part in the normal Easter preparations, churches are closed, people are afraid to go out, don't want to stay in, and many of course are sick or bereaved. Clubs and respite care is not available, we are having to draw on our own resources.

We are fearful and confused. But, is that not just how it was for the disciples? They accompanied Jesus on his arrival into Jerusalem in triumph, it seemed as if everything that they had hoped and prayed for was going to come to pass, but just a few short days later all those hopes and plans were dashed as they surveyed their Lord hanging on a cross alongside common criminals. They too, were afraid to go out, afraid of being associated with this man in whom they had put all their faith and yet it seemed as if that was the end. But of course what we know now is that it took that agony of Good Friday for the joy of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday to come about.

This current crisis, too, will end and we will be different people. We have seen that money can be made available when it is essential. We have seen a glorious outpouring of people wanting to help with over 750,000 volunteers coming forward in just a few days. We have seen gratitude for the small things, and the big things. We have seen the bravery of our NHS staff and bus drivers, shop workers and many more leaving their families to come into work to look after us, knowingly and selflessly putting themselves at risk for the benefit of us all. We have seen neighbourhoods and coming together, families actually being together and doing simple things like gardening and sewing together, rather than an endless round of after school clubs and activities. People are being more creative, using technology to connect, participating in online services, perhaps more often that they would have been able to go to Church. All of this is building community, albeit in a different way.

There will also be loss of loved ones but when this is all over we must not go back to our old ways, we must learn and remember what was good and positive from this pandemic crisis and build on it. We need to engage with the new army of volunteers, to realise that nobody should be alone or homeless, that every single person matters. As one survivor of the Coronavirus said, "I look at everything differently now, as if I was seeing it for the first time, I appreciate everything I have so much now".

May God keep you and your families safe and well and as the Queen said in her recent speech to the Nation, " We will be with our friends again, we will be with our families again, we will meet again."

Happy Easter to you all.