

Reflection by Deacon Nick Johnson

We say that we have faith, hope and love and in these three, our Christianity is fulfilled. Our faith may be largely internal, sometimes strong and secure, sometimes beset by doubts. It is usually expressed in community in prayer with our brothers and sisters as the church. In our current life as a dispersed monastic community, we may be praying alone, meditating on our situation and begging the Lord, with millions of others of many faiths for deliverance from the worst of the work of the virus.

Our hope is based on the promise of Jesus at the Ascension when he promised his Spirit would be with us and that He too 'would be with us, yes, until the end of time'. And beyond our earthly life, all of our effort is driven by a desire for heaven and eternal life, where our hope will be fulfilled.

Our love is necessary to complete these founding principles and is only love when expressed in relation to another person or other people. This is not an exclusive gift that we own, that can be distributed at our whim but God in us. Caritas is Love in Action - that completion of ourselves as we share everything.

In James 2:14-26, the expectation that good deeds are a vital part of our faith cannot be clearer and one cannot exist without the other. It is our duty to do good things as part of our Christianity to the extent we can. It is also essential that our activity is supported by prayer, a founding principal of the new evangelisation agenda.

What we do may not be quantitatively significant to the world - a smile, a conversation with the person sitting at the side of the road. Where someone has the means, God expects them to apply their blessings to the work in the same way as the poorest. When some of us are out and about carrying out practical tasks for the good of others, it is equally necessary that we have as many people praying for success of that work, that it fulfils God's will for us and takes us nearer to building his Kingdom here on earth.

We are confident that the work is underway all over the Diocese and we should continue to share what we do, what we have tried and what we have as there may be another of us that needs to hear what God gave to us as the inspiration for their next work. Thank you!

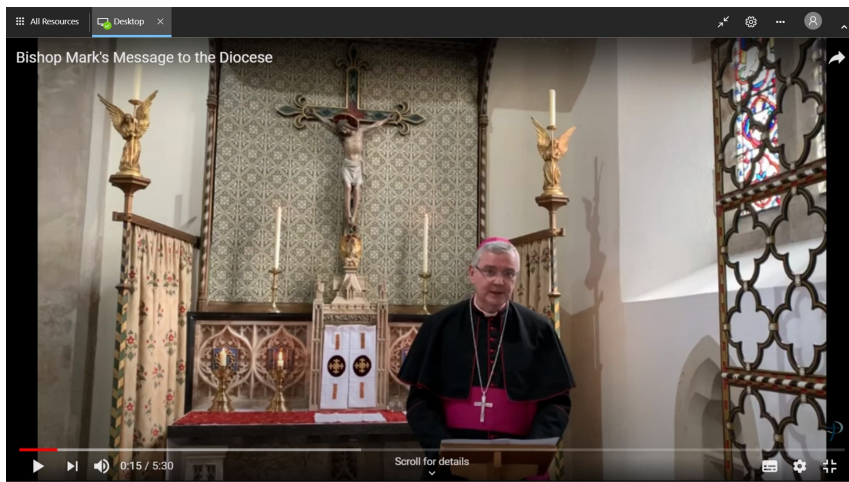


**Caritas Plymouth aims to provide a network in which good practice can be shared. During the current crisis, Caritas has been working with partners to gather new ideas and inspiration. This note aims to share that work to inspire and encourage others.**

## Pastoral Care and Proclaiming the Word of God

There has been an amazing growth in the use of social media to share Mass and prayer through live streaming and youtube. Thousands of people have been supported and encouraged through these messages of hope with more people attending 'virtual' masses than might normally be able to attend Church. We are extremely grateful for the commitment of our Priests in celebrating daily mass for us all and where possible for sharing prayer and reflection online.

The response to these efforts—often using only a mobile phone—has been wonderful. The Cathedral had over 2000 views for Easter Sunday Mass and Bishop Mark's message to the Diocese on 19 March had over 4500 views. At a parish level there is great work happening and we are all grateful to our parish priests for celebrating mass for us every day and where possible sharing that celebration with others.



Blessed Sacrament Exeter had over 470 views of the Easter Vigil on Facebook. Over 700 people viewed the mass at St Mary's Poole on 19 April on youtube. There were over 200 views of St Cuthbert Mayne Launceston Easter Saturday rosary reflection on youtube. Other parishes are using Zoom and Skype to share Mass and volunteers are providing support to people to get on line.

Priests, Deacons and other religious are offering support to all those who seek it. Pastoral care continues and in some creative ways - including opportunities for the Sacrament of Penance (whilst respecting social distancing using the car park).

Priests and Deacon are ministering to the dying in hospitals, Care Homes and private house, offering Sacraments and praying. Hospital chaplains continue to provide spiritual support to the sick and dying in hospitals across the Diocese. Mass offerings for personal intentions and prayer intentions provide comfort, encouragement and support. Each week parishioners are connected through email and letters from their parish priests

## Reaching out to the isolated and most vulnerable

Parishes are compiling lists of parishioners who will find isolation difficult to cope with and linking them up with those willing to provide befriending. Parish volunteers in some areas have set up rotas to call vulnerable people on a regular basis, some providing shopping or other practical support for those who are self-isolating.

Priests are actively encouraging parishioners who are not self-isolating to volunteer locally. Those who are isolating are being encouraged to offer phone support

Our parishioners are being asked to remember others and to support other charities e.g. through donations to foodbanks.

Some parishes have made their grounds available for families living without gardens to provide a safe space to take their daily exercise



One parish group is knitting hearts to send with a card to all Care Homes in the parish area, thanking them for what they are doing, and letting them know we are praying for them. First communion children have been invited to make rainbows which will also be included.

One Parish Sewing Group delivered 400 cotton drawstring bags to their local hospital. The bags are for staff to put their scrubs in so that they can put the whole thing in the washing machine. 400! The money has been raised by the members of the group from past events and personal donations.

Direct support is provided to vulnerable groups (including seafarers, refugees, homeless and the elderly) through key partner charities including SVP, Catholic Children's Society (Plymouth), St Petroc's and Stella Maris.

One SVP group pays for a lunch each week for young people living in a hostel.



St Petroc's have raised over £20,000 through Crowdfunding and regularly support over 50 homeless people with access to food and washing facilities.

The Catholic Womens' League are donating funds to local foodbanks, the NHS and charities

## SVP IN ACTION

SVP conferences across the Diocese have been doing amazing work reaching out to the most vulnerable, donating money to local foodbanks and providing funding to a hostel in Exeter to buy provide a meal for young people each week.

Fr Paul Cummins has given the following account of their work in his parish:

‘The SVP in Sidmouth, and various parishioners who have volunteered to help them, have been actively working to support the vulnerable in the community during the lockdown. The work has captured the imagination of those who may otherwise find themselves with time on their hands, and has given them a great way to put our faith into action in very practical ways. The SVP group started off by phoning around their 30 beneficiaries, but soon word got out and that number grew to 110 people. New volunteers then came on board, doubling their numbers. They have now expanded their services to retrieving shopping for those in isolation and even to providing emergency DIY work for those in desperate need. Without realising, their normal simple acts of love have come together to form a network of support for their local community. This week they have welcomed further helpers and now have a team 25 people making at least weekly telephone contact call to over 120 parishioners, as well as a ‘shop and drop team’ of 6 delivering groceries and prescriptions. They also have an emergency DIY volunteer. They have found that people really appreciate being contacted whether they need help or not. Often just knowing they are being remembered and thought about is enough. The group continues to grow from strength to strength.



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## Young people and schools

Our Catholic schools continue to provide support for the children of Key Workers and/or vulnerable children and provide inspiration and encouragement.

32 Plymouth CAST schools are currently open across the Diocese. On an average day, over 250 children of key workers and vulnerable children are being cared for in our schools.

Young people are sharing messages of inspiration and encouragement via our Diocesan Facebook page, with short video messages and art work including beautiful Easter Gardens.



Schools have created rainbow banners to thank those supporting the sick and dying.

Some Catholic schools are organizing their own food collections and taking food to vulnerable families. In one primary, school deliveries are being undertaken by teachers as part of the process of ensuring that children get the support they need at this time. Here is a quote posted on Facebook from one family:

*'We received ours [parcel] this morning and it brought my mum to actual tears! We are overwhelmed by the help and support the school has offered us and would like to say we are truly grateful for everything!'*

Primary school children and those preparing for First Holy Communion have written letters to older people who are self-isolating in a number of our parishes and have started to receive responses.

Young people are sharing [children's liturgy via Youtube](#)

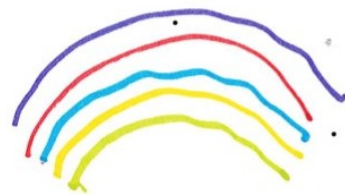


Dear Friend Eric

Thank you for your lovely message and joke. It really cheered us up. Have a good time off school and be safe. Look after your family.

God Bless

Love from your new friends



Caritas Plymouth aims to provide fresh impetus to put the command of the Lord into practise: 'Love one another as I have loved you', (John 13:34-35). It works with partner organisations already existing to put the Church's [Social Teaching](#) into action and provide a network to share good practice in the service of the most poor and vulnerable. It also aims to encourage new initiatives to put the Gospel imperative of love and mercy into action.

Please do get in touch to share your good practice or to seek new ideas [caritas@predtr.org.uk](mailto:caritas@predtr.org.uk)

Quote from St Oscar Romero

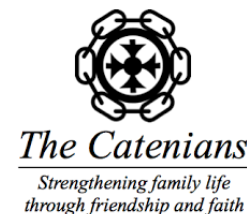
*There aren't two categories of people*

*There aren't some who were born  
to have everything, leaving the rest with nothing,  
and a majority that has nothing  
and cannot taste the happiness  
that God has created for all.*

*The Christian society that God wants  
is one in which we share  
the goodness  
that God has given for everyone*



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