

# Christ the Saviour Newsletter 2

Summer 2021



My dear Friends,

On Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July, all legal restrictions put in place during the pandemic were lifted. It had been hoped by some that this would result in a huge outpouring of enthusiasm and joyful energy - Freedom Day. The reality, however, has been not total excitement, but rather a significant level of exhaustion. We are all tired, battered by our isolation from one another, starved of human contact and experiences that feed our spirit and enrich our soul.

Almost seventy years ago a condition was identified that has existed since the beginning of time. It's officially labelled Secondary Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or Secondary Victimization, but it's more commonly known as Compassion Fatigue, and it was first identified in among nurses providing long term care of veterans from the war.

A central tenet is that constant exposure to suffering and tragedy can dull our sensibilities. We are all familiar with that. We fail to be shocked as we hear of child refugees saying they want to die when their boats are pushed back from the shores of Greece, or the fact that in this twenty-first century genocide is still being practiced, against the Rohingya in Myanmar, in the Tigray province of Ethiopia, or the Uyghurs in China.

Compassion fatigue, or world weariness, results in a gradual reduction in compassion over time. It often presents as hopelessness, a decrease in the experience of pleasure, constant stress and anxiety, and a pervasive negative attitude.

Some of this you may recognise in your own reaction to the pandemic. Writing as I am in the middle of August, just as Afghanistan has again been overrun by the Taliban, I can detect some of this attitude in international political leaders – though I am less certain of the response of their populations.

Moreover, this is a theme that is central to Scripture, surfacing in surprising ways.

The prophet Jeremiah lived six centuries before Christ, and throughout his lifetime much of the Middle East was at war. The people were exhausted, violence was the norm and the future looked bleak. They were world weary. And into that heady mix Jeremiah brings an uncharacteristically hopeful message, that God would send a king who would govern justly, restoring peace and normal life.

*The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety.*

Similarly, the Letter to the Ephesians speaks into a world where people were divided from one another, where trust had broken down, and walls built to keep the aliens and outsiders at bay. It's a wonderful passage, rich in imagery –

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.*

St Paul is reminding us that in Christ the walls have been broken down and that we live together as one building.

Both Jeremiah and St Paul are speaking to a vision of what might be, a vision promised by God. A vision that is over there, tantalisingly close, but yet still beyond us, caught up as we are in the world as it is.

Which brings us to Jesus. At the height of his popularity, his disciples have been going out to the towns and villages and speaking of the kingdom of God. Jesus and his disciples set off in a boat for some time away. Compassion fatigue is the clear concern of Jesus for his disciples, who have become exhausted. *Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves, and rest awhile*, he says. They were exhausted. They had no leisure even to eat.

Many of us can identify with that, perhaps from all that we have had to cope with during the pandemic lockdowns, as, now, during the time in which things are meant to be 'returning to normal' but are so clearly not doing that yet. Our lives are so busy and full of

activity that we can easily end up without space. And leisure, that truly essential ingredient for a balanced life, disappears without trace. Bertrand Russell, in *The Conquest of Happiness*, says that 'to be able to fill leisure intelligently is the last product of civilisation'.

We are, in some ways, living in a time of perfect storm: I'm too busy – I haven't time – I'm too tired – I'm too stressed – and so many of us are very good at pointing out the failures of others (and of our institutions, including the Church) also to deliver and to get the balance right at this juncture. The condition of modern life, with all the wealth at our disposal, is surprisingly unbalanced.

So, we are over-tired, yet also so frequently unable to enjoy the space that we have been given. We are running out of compassion and yet frequently critical of those who do try to take things slowly and prepare for the long haul back to health.

But it is into this situation that Jesus speaks, and into this place of hunger and fear that he offers bread and hope and healing.

As I said, I am writing in August – as my own holiday begins – and I am so grateful to be able to have the perspective to do so and the real leisure to be able to put down some of the things that have been preoccupying me – as they will have been preoccupying you also – for many months.

If we can, may we all enjoy these brief weeks, allowing them to work at restoring us, so that we can be prepared for a new autumn together.

During autumn we will be taking the next steps in restarting different parts of our shared life, not least seeking to appoint a permanent organist and to reopen our Sunday School. Preparations for these steps are all happening now, as safeguarding processes for volunteers are put into place and as I work with the Diocese's Organ Adviser.

As we look towards the autumn, it is my prayer that God's people will continue to be open to Him – to his future, his hope, his love and his compassion. I pray that, in both our leisure and our work, we will be as sensitive as we can be to His call in our lives and His presence among us. Thank you for your faithfulness, your caring, your trust. It is a privilege to serve as your parish priest and, thankful for all that has been I look forward in prayerful hope to all that is to come.

For many of us getting away this summer to any kind of *deserted place all by yourselves where we can rest awhile* will not be easy. At the end of this terrible period of darkness we may all feel that we are emerging exhausted, blinking into the light. It may be that we simply have to seek to create the space within, that secret space where we meet ourselves and God.

Wherever it is, Jesus says the same words to all of us,

*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

With my love and prayers,

Fr Richard

On Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June 1971, Fr Andrew Davis was ordained to the Sacred Priesthood by David, Lord Bishop of Rochester in His Cathedral Church of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Fifty years later, Fr Andrew celebrated his Golden Jubilee at St John's, Hingham, where he serves as an honorary assistant priest. After university at St Chad's College, Durham and priestly formation at St Stephen's House Oxford, he served as curate of St James', Beckenham coming to London as curate of St Mary Abbott's, Kensington. After his first incumbency at St Andrew's Sudbury, he blessed this parish and community of Christ the Saviour for twenty-six years as vicar. The fruits of that ministry continue to flourish and countless are the lives he touched here in Ealing. Thank you, Fr Andrew, for all that you were and are to us. Be assured of our congratulations on this milestone, and of our love, prayers and very best wishes for all that lies ahead.

Thanks be to God.

Our church is open daily from 9:00am until 5:00pm for private prayer and reflection. Please refer to Christ the Saviour webpage for Mass times. All are welcome. Compassionate spacing and other courtesies will be observed, so that all feel safe and welcome.

To contribute to Christ the Saviour church, please visit <https://pay.churchdesk.com/CtDP.OfQ8>. Or scan:



Thank you so much for your continued support and generosity in ensuring Christ the Saviour continues to be a warm, welcoming, house of prayer here at the heart of Ealing Broadway.