

Dear all

Apologies for the delay in sending this. I spent a long time yesterday deep scanning my computer for viruses/malware. Apparently, I have been hacked somewhere, and an email has been sent asking for help, which when replied to asks you to get an Amazon voucher on my behalf. Don't reply to it! If you get an email from anyone purporting to be someone you know, but looks a bit unusual – especially if it is asking for help – check the address it is coming from. That is the real giveaway. Anything from me will only be from vicar@...

Many years ago, I took part in a 'Messiah for the Spire' at Salisbury Cathedral. It was an amazing occasion. Sir David Willcocks stood in the middle of the crossing, with a massed choir of hundreds – sopranos and altos filling the nave, tenors in the north transept, and basses in the south. His control of us all was masterly. The alto, or rather counter-tenor soloist that evening was the wonderful Michael Chance, and I waited with extreme anticipation for his performance of *He was despised*. It came... the singing was immaculate, but HE DIDN'T DO THE REPEAT!!!! Arrgh! It was a time-factor thing I think, but it has stuck in my mind all those years (probably 25- 30 years ago!).

The words come directly from the prophet Isaiah. *He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with Grief. (Isaiah 53:3). He gave his back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: He hid not His face from shame and spitting. (Isaiah 50:6).* It is an exquisitely beautiful piece, very suited to Passiontide. The following recording is by one of my favourite singers, Jakub Józef Orliński. I particularly like the subtle ornamentation in the repeat.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzeZsDfoLXU>

If you like that, you might also like a rather more secular, but equally exquisitely beautiful duet by Monteverdi – *Pur ti miro* from *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, sung by Marie-Nicole Lemieux & Philippe Jaroussky (another of my favourite singers). The words appear quite lovely:

Poppea: I gaze at you
 Nero: I delight in you
 P: I tighten closer to you
 N: I am bound to you
 P: I no longer suffer
 N: I no longer die
 P/N: Oh my life
 Oh my treasure.

Then a lighter section breaks from the ostinato with declarations of love:

P: I am yours
 N: You are mine
 P: My hope,
 N: say it, say,
 P: The idol of mine,
 N: Yes, my love,
 P/N: Yes, my heart,
 my life, yes.

Then a return to the original.

Beautiful – but it is a celebration of the adulterous affair between Nero and Poppaea. The history behind the story is that, after falling for Poppaea, Nero exiles his wife, Octavia, for barrenness, and forces her

supporter Seneca to commit suicide. Nero shipwrecks his own mother, allegedly for supporting Octavia, and when she manages to make it to shore, has her executed. Octavia too is later executed. Poppaea herself comes to a grisly end, apparently kicked to death by Nero in a fit of anger. I find it fascinating that such beautiful music can encapsulate such tragedy and, well, sin I suppose! I'm sure there's a dissertation in there somewhere.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vfkZRNigAI>

On a sad note, Tim Hitchborn has informed me that Anne Smart has died. Many of you will remember her. She and her husband George used to be regular worshippers at our Church. Our thoughts and prayers are with George and the family.

This Sunday is Palm Sunday. We have a great stock of palm crosses, but, unfortunately, there is no safe way of getting them out. You may however want to make your own glueless paper palm cross. This link tells you how:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=266100647742443>

The Missionaries of the Holy Spirit posted this idea on their Facebook page: *What if everyone on Sunday April 5 in the morning, puts a branch on the door of their house or on the window, to celebrate Palm Sunday? It could be any green branch you can get. This would help, despite the social distancing, to be connected as we enter into the Holiest of Weeks.*

*Want to join? We may be physically isolated, but not separated. We are united as the body of Christ. **We are the Church.***

When you're struggling to pray during these dark days of the coronavirus pandemic (7) – Nick Fawcett

Here's another prayer that may help you to find words to articulate some of your thoughts and fears when you're struggling to pray during these dark days of the coronavirus pandemic, and remind you that, however much it may feel like it, you are not alone.

I've been complacent, Lord,
my faith shallow,
ill-thought-through,
comfortably assuming that whatever life brings,
everything will be all right.
It will, of course, in the context of eternity,
but in terms of life now,
it's a different story,
for you do not promise your followers any less trouble than the next person,
nor guarantee that anyone,
no matter how deserving,
will be immune to this world's trials and tribulations.
I've grasped that with my mind,
but in my heart I foolishly imagined otherwise,
daring to believe that you will protect me from every danger,
whatever form it might take.
Teach me to trust,
not that you will deliver me from harm,
but that you will support me through it,
however testing it may be,
and that nothing in earth or heaven,
life or death,

will ever be able to separate me from your everlasting love in Jesus Christ our Lord,
the same yesterday,
today,
tomorrow
and always.
Amen.

Stay safe.

Blessings and love

Mark