

Dear all

Yesterday, Bishop David led a service online which was the annual renewal of Ordination Vows. It would have been my first in the diocese, and it is a real shame I could not be at Lincoln Cathedral for the event. But that is one of the least of our present worries. The gospel reading for the service was one of my favourite passages, Luke 7:36-50. In it, Jesus goes to the house of a respectable member of society for a meal. The meal is interrupted by a woman with a bad reputation, who falls at Jesus' feet, bathing his feet with her tears. This is shocking behaviour – but Jesus contrasts her devotion with that of the sanctimoniousness of the host and his friends. It's all about love... the love of God for even the greatest sinner, resulting in love returned. There is a feeling of 'overwhelmingness' in God's love... and that of the woman in response. One of my favourite singer-songwriters, Don Francisco sings a beautiful song based on the story, *Beautiful to me*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wij0t1VpkE>

It particularly reminds me of some words in one of the hymns I chose for my induction – *And can it be*.

He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread...

The German's have a wonderful word *ohrwurm* or *earworm*. It describes a tune that gets into your mind and you can't get rid of it. Often, unfortunately, it is there because it is so banal or awful. Trust me to mention Boney M in my last letter. I now can't get it out of my head – though I have noticed that if you put it in a minor key and slow it down a bit, it sounds almost Jewish. More appropriate I would say.

As an antidote, I would point you towards the following recording of J S Bach's *An Wasserflüssen Babylon*, BWV 653 Performed by Bert van Stam, on the Mense Ruiter organ, Maranathakerk Den Haag.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fh6DXFNwXE8&fbclid=IwAR3i1IDmPHIBuqZ--WramLyioip6Rf8iCgeG9I0eZ1BhfqLxjWDSjMpQMlk>

When you're struggling to pray during these dark days of the coronavirus pandemic (14) by 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.

In our fear, Lord, be our confidence.

In our weakness, be our strength.

In our panic, be our calm.

In our sickness be our healing.

In our confusion, be our anchor.

In our insecurity, be our rock.

In our darkness, be our light.

In our grief, be our solace.

In our despair, be our hope.

In our storm, be our sunshine.

In our night, be our day.

Amen.

Stay safe

Blessings and love

Mark