

An Open Letter to our Parishioners

**Yet, though we rebelled against Him
like adolescents, uplifted to see
an oppressive father banished –
a bearded hermit – to the desert,
we confess to missing Him at times.**

Another poem, this one by Dennis O'Driscoll entitled *Missing God*; I rediscovered it in a box of clippings I thought might be suitable for giving colour to a sermon. It was printed in The Guardian in 2002, the torn out and neatly folded page is now appropriately yellowed, well on its way to gaining a sepia tinge. The poem comes from a different time, when illness was something to be kept at a distance and tragedy struck a few; not a time of pandemic when simply standing too close to someone and sharing their air could be a health hazard. The poem continues to describe how 'an involuntary prayer escapes our lips' when bad news is received, as if prayer were a fleeting thing.

Many of us find prayer difficult to sustain, or perhaps even begin, and yet in times of trouble we too find ourselves calling out to God when we feel helpless, fearful, mortal...

Our Archbishops have once again called the nation to prayer, each evening at 6pm for the month of February. This is handy as some of us have been pausing each evening at 6 to share in the words of Compline (via the internet of course). It is handy as many people stop to eat at about this time, and perhaps, despite the poet's claim 'His grace is no longer called for before meals'; this could be a good time to tune in to the heavenlies.

The Archbishops write: **In response to reaching the terrible milestone of 100,000 deaths from COVID-19... in February we invite you to set aside time every evening to pray, particularly at 6pm. More than ever, this is a time when we need to love each other. Prayer is an expression of love.**

With love and blessings,

Vanessa

A reminder that **Compline** is livestreamed each evening at 6pm here www.facebook.com/thewallopingvicar/live