



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Wednesday Healing Eucharist 1st April 2020
The Priest Pastor's Kitchen.

Romans 8:18-25
John 16:31-33

In today's gospel, Jesus is taking a last opportunity to talk to his disciples before his arrest, crucifixion and death.

They have shared such intimate times together; the last supper, the washing of feet. He has taught them with such love. Finally, they say, now we really believe in you, that you came from God. But then, a stark warning. '*Do you* now believe?' says Jesus 'A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home'. He is referring of course to his arrest, trial, and the fact that most of the dearest friends he now shares sweet communion with will run to their homes for fear, deny him, leave him to die alone.

How telling those words are for us at this time. This Passiontide we too are scattered each to our own home. Not in fear of Roman soldiers, but from the deadly virus that stalks our world. No longer, for the moment can we share sweet fellowship in person with church, friends and family. No longer for the moment can we share the kiss of peace, taste the wine, walk together in God's house. We lament, we hold this bitter time in solidarity with those who have suffered these privations for years, which many of us are unaccustomed to.

But alongside this, Jesus' words of encouragement speak to our hearts. 'I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have persecution. But take heart! I have overcome the world!'. God is with us and will bring us through this strange and unsettling time.

Jesus' disciples abandoned him; but Jesus will never abandon us. Tell him your fears and anxieties; ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to get through this time, not in your own strength or optimism, but in the power of the Spirit. From Deuteronomy 31:6 'Be strong, have no fear because the Lord your God goes with you, he will not fail you or forsake you'
I end with a poem by John O'Donahue that has much to say to us at this present time:

This is the time to be slow,
Lie low to the wall
Until the bitter weather passes.

Try, as best you can, not to let
The wire brush of doubt
Scrape from your heart
All sense of yourself
And your hesitant light.

If you remain generous,
Time will come good;
And you will find your feet
Again on fresh pastures of promise,
Where the air will be kind
And blushed with beginning.