

PANDEMIC EXERCISES

(3) Simple exercises



'I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,
may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him,
so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened,
you may know what is the hope to which it has called you,
what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the Saints,
and what is the unimaginable greatness of his power for us to believe
according to the working of his great power.'
(Ephesians 1:17f NRSV)

'May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power,
and may you be prepared to endure with patience,
while joyfully giving thanks to the Father
who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the Saints in light.
He has rescued us from the power of darkness
and transferred us into the Kingdom of his beloved Son,
in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.'
(Colossians 1:11-14 NRSV) 14

Christians realise that compassion in Jesus, and any spiritual exercises are best practiced with him who – 'thought we cannot see him – is closer to us than our breath. So, here is the first exercise you can practice – in the comfort of your chair or, if you have one, you could use a prayer-stool. So:

Decide how long you'll spend with Jesus. How long would you give to physical exercises? Fifteen minutes? Half an hour? Then,

- Sit in a chair that will hold your back firmly but in a relaxed manner, or use a meditation stool;
- Allow your senses to be present to the place you have adopted.

Slowly read one of the passages quoted above and allow what they are saying to sink into your heart (you could gently record them on your i-phone and listen to them). Read (or listen) to them again taking time to 'hear' the words.

- Notice if any stand out ... *'with the eyes of your heart enlightened'; 'may (I) endure with patience' ...*
- Let the words stay with you – keep repeating them – take them deeper into your heart.
- Personalise them: *'May God give me a spirit of wisdom and understanding ...'.*
- Turn them into a short prayer *'Jesus, enlighten my heart.'* Repeat the words slowly on your lips. Then take them more deeply, let them descend with your breath into your heart and, slowly, repeat them there.

- At times, I find it helpful to simply sit and take the name Je-sus into my breath, lowly repeating it with each syllable either descending with my breath – 'Je' – or being exhaled – 'sus'. You could do the same with a phrase such as the ancient petition: 'O God' (in), 'come to my aid' (out). And many find what is known as the 'Jesus Prayer' to be of immense help:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God (in),
have mercy on me (out).*

- You'll probably find your 'thoughts' beginning to take over. If so, let them pass by; put them away from you; keep brining your attention back to the word or phrase, this spiritual exercise also concerns learning how to deal with enormous variety of distractions that we experience. What's important is to STAY WITH YOUR WORK OR PHRASE for as long as you have decided.
- At the end of the time, express your thanks in words such as: *Glory to God, source of all being, eternal Word and Holy Spirit.* You will possibly find that the word or phrase 'sticks' and re-appears through the day – good! If it does, give it some thankful attention – this exercise is concerned with re-ordering our inner attention.

May the centre of my being be one with the Heart of Christ. Amen.
