

Lent 3 Year B 2018

Well, what a week of weather we've just had. I for one, have been strangely drawn to the reporting of it all on the television while I am in warm and the broadcasters are standing outside getting battered by gales and blizzards. I've sympathised too with those who have got themselves stranded and I've admired the efforts of those trying to get to where they are needed, especially in the medical and caring professions. But I've also been somehow deeply disturbed by normal communications being cut off- motorways, railways and airports being closed. We should be able to get to where we want to, but we can't. We've had access denied. And we are used to having full access, whoever we are. Buses for instance, almost kneel down at bus stops so that we can step on easily or wheel a chair or a buggy on board. Rightly, we can be proud of this and pleased about it.

And you know, I get the feeling that Jesus is pleased about it as well, just as he was **furious** that day at the temple where he saw access denied or at least severely limited. The temple was THE place where you could be with God but lepers, sinners, tax collectors and women (very often), all had access denied. And with all the selling of animals for sacrifice and the profiteering of the money exchangers, it was difficult for poor people to get access. Their access was certainly limited. And we surely know Jesus well enough to predict that he wasn't going to stand for it!

Sure enough he attacks them. He wants them out of the way. Moreover he makes a special reference to the future, a specific prophecy that this was a sign of things to come where the temple would no longer matter because he would be its replacement. Access to God would be through him. Destroy THIS temple and in three days God would raise it up. Here in Jesus there would be access for all. In fact, as Jesus says elsewhere, no one can come to the Father (have access to God) except through him.

So, in his ministry Jesus reached out to everyone especially those who seemed for one reason or another to have their access to God limited, and now here at the entrance to the temple he makes quite a spectacle of his intention to give everyone access to God and he says that in any case, in the future ALL access will be through him.

... Which means that all of us, whoever we are, do have full access. We have what humanity always wished for... So now what? What do we do with that open access and that's the question posed in your Lenten prayer journal. What is an appropriate conversation to have with God? All

Think about the conversation that you do have with God, have always had with God. First of all be grateful for it. Jesus gave up his life in sacrifice so that we can enjoy it. But ask yourself too if you get the most out of it. Let us reassure ourselves for instance, that our conversation and our relationship with God is not just about asking for God's help. It would be such a waste if that's all it was.

*If you've still got this purple book, "Rediscover Jesus", that I gave you during Advent, you will find several pointers towards what can be in our conversation.

"The prayer process", as the author all calls it, should begin with gratitude for any good things in our day.

There should then be time to reflect upon the times and occasions when you were not the best version of yourself, to learn from them, to express sorrow for them and to accept forgiveness for them.

There should be time to relax and enjoy being in God's presence and time to listen to anything God may have been saying through the day's events.

There should be time to open yourself to the future, to the day ahead and the freedom to become a better version of yourself.

And there should be time to commend others to God's mercy.

In other words there is nothing stopping us from having a very full and full-filling relationship with God. It may just take a little **time**! But time is the theme that this year we are focusing on within our spirituality of stewardship. Whatever we have promised and expressed in the promise cards that hang with Jesus on our Lenten Cross there is always room for a further promise to give some quality time to God.