

PORTSMOUTH CATHEDRAL

Reflections for those who are self-isolating

Malcolm Guite wrote recently of 'accidental anchorites' in medical isolation. Anchorites were a type of hermit who were walled into their 'anchorhold' (cell) for life. They would typically have a window into the church building and a window where others could come to talk on spiritual matters. Could you treat this time as an opportunity for spiritual growth and deepening your relationship with God?

- Be encouraged by the thought that, although you are cut off physically, you are being upheld by the prayer of your Christian brothers and sisters around the world and in your locality. You can contribute to that ever-flowing river of prayer and connect with them.
- Pray for the sufferers in hospital and the exhausted medical staff. Pray for older people and those with lowered immunity, who are especially anxious.
- Consider how you might structure your days in order to use this period as a retreat time in which to draw closer to God. You might like to pray in the morning, at midday, in the evening and before bed. How you pray is your choice, it could be the set Church of England daily prayer, but go with what works for you.
- You could take the opportunity to experiment with unfamiliar forms of prayer: let yourself be nourished with classical sacred music or worship songs, try silent contemplative prayer, dance your prayers, plant seeds of hope in plant pots and water them...
- If you are used to having a prayer partner or prayer triplet, you can still meet by phone or Skype. The same if a meeting with your spiritual director falls due during your isolation time.
- Think about keeping an 'isolation journal' and reflecting before God on what is going through your heart and mind. He is near even when you feel anxious and find it hard to connect. It doesn't have to be a journal in words, you could draw, collage, take photographs.

- This experience might be a challenge to your trust in God: what could help you feel secure that he loves you and will uphold you through the season of isolation? God's love for each of us will carry us safely through the ups and downs of life and into eternity. If you are feeling anxious, it might help to limit your exposure to the news and instead strengthen your inner calm by watching or reading 'feelgood' stories.
- Your telephone is a gift from God: how might you use it to reach out to others who are alone? Perhaps you've heard of others who are self-isolating; can you call them? Can you spend more time on the phone to friends or family than you normally have time for? This could be a chance to renew those relationships.
- Now might be the time when you finally get around to reading that spiritual book or listening to that podcast.
- Lent is a time to 'let go and let God'. Can you reframe your thoughts about all that you're missing, and offer these things thankfully to God for a season?
- Thank God for the unexpected rest, and allow yourself to enjoy it without feeling guilty.

With thanks to The Revd Dr Ruth Tuschling, Diocesan Spirituality Adviser.

Joining in with worship online

Portsmouth Cathedral is live streaming two services a day on Facebook. You do not need to be a member of Facebook to join, simply follow this link as the service is about to begin: <https://www.facebook.com/portsmouthcathedral/>

Service times:

Monday-Saturday

8.15am Morning Prayer

5.30pm Evening Prayer

Sunday

9.00am Holy Communion

5.30pm Evening Prayer

All are welcome to join.