



Letter from Matthew Bartlett, Head Master

Thursday 9th April 2020

Dear Friends,

In these troubled and uniquely challenging times, every evening I have taken to going through my address book to make contact with friends who are now in lockdown to see how they are keeping and if truth be told also to make human contact for myself. It is a daily reminder of how as human beings we have a basic need to interact with others on however a superficial level. The challenge of lockdown is not just finding something to do, not just having to fill the hours but missing the casual conversations, the chance to exchange greetings of goodwill and to laugh, to argue and to discuss. It is a huge void for all of us.

Easter brings the chance to celebrate the most glorious feast in the Church's calendar with its message of hope and joy. For most of us the greatest void this week will not be the lack of human interaction that has marked lockdown but the fact that we will not be able to physically attend the Masses and rituals that mark our Easter celebrations. Of course we have seen the online Masses and liturgies and they are crucial in nourishing our spiritual hunger. But personally, I thirst for the physical re-enactment of those last moments of Christ's life on earth and the liturgical majesty of the Easter Saturday service and the sheer joy of Easter Sunday. My mind goes back to all the wonderful places I have celebrated Easter. It could be standing in crowds outside the cathedral in Riga because it was so full of people who had their faith suppressed under the communists that they were determined to bear physical witness now they were freed from tyranny. Or being reduced to tears by the power of a Mozart mass in the Frauen Kirche in Munich and then in true Bavarian style moving on to the beer hall with the congregation. Perhaps it was spending Easter with a monk friend at his monastery in Yorkshire and re-living and reflecting every moment of the Easter journey from the entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday through the crucifixion and then getting up in the middle of Saturday night to greet the Easter dawn. Easter in each of these and many other locations has always been immensely special to me and a talismanic part of my year and central to how I engage with my faith.

This Easter will be like no other and I don't know yet how it will feel although it seems alien and remote from my experience. Speaking to one of my friends on one of those evening telephone calls, she shared with me how isolated she felt and how she missed seeing her grandchildren and children. I asked if she had managed to see any of the grandchildren and she told me she had gone round to drop off shopping on the step but had remained outside the house. The terraced house in which her grandchildren lived had one of those long corridor like entrance halls running from the front of the house to the back. Almost at the end of the corridor was one of her grandchildren who simply stood there and said 'I'm sending you hugs grandma'. She told me she had a great sense of joy and was anticipating the day when lockdown would be lifted and she could physically hug her grandchild, It gave her great joy and hope just to see and imagine interacting in that distant point of human contact.

There is no doubt that the darkness of Lent has been far more prevalent in these uncertain weeks and the light of Easter seems veiled at present. But in that encounter that my friend told me of, I saw a sense of hope. We are a community united by faith and just as my friend gained hope in the anticipation of reunion with her grandchild, so perhaps we too can find



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hope in the risen Christ and optimism for better times to come. We all seek assurance and answers at the moment. Easter does not bring all the answers but it does bring assurance of the glory of Christ and hope for our world through the resurrection of His son.

Easter this year will not be as we have experienced it before but I do pray that you will find comfort, joy and above all hope as once more we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord.

Every good wish and prayers,

Matthew Bartlett

Head Master



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GREAT THINGS HAPPEN IN THE GREEN BLAZER