

Written by C.S. Lewis in 1942 in response to the effects of WW II....

C.S. Lewis 1942

Satan: "I will cause anxiety,
fear and panic.
I will shutdown
business, schools,
places of worship
and sports events.
I will cause economic turmoil".

Jesus: "I will bring together neighbours,
restore the family unit,
I will bring dinner back
to the kitchen table.
I will help people slow down their lives
and appreciate what really matters.
I will teach my children to rely on me
and not the world.
I will teach my children to trust me
and not their money and material resources."

THE PARISHES OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST AND ST MARY MAGDALENE
35 Brighton Place, Edinburgh EH15 1LL Bingham Avenue, Edinburgh EH15 3HY

Parish Priest: Fr. Jock Dalrymple: 0131 669 5447

Deacon – Revd Eddie White 07986 015772

Pastoral Team: Alice Codling, Jennifer Morris and Chris Vinestock

Shared Parish House: 3 Sandford Gardens, EH15 1LP

Administrator: Karen Blair (Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday: 10am to 3pm)

Web address: www.stjohnsportobello.co.uk Web address: www.stmarymagdalenes.co.uk

Joint e-mail for our sister parishes: stjohnsandstmarymagdalenes@gmail.com

3rd Sunday of Easter - Sunday 26 April 2020

WELCOME....If you're visiting, are new to the area, or just live here, you are most welcome in our sister parishes – even if, sadly, for the moment we can't welcome you to our churches. If you are new to the parish or area, please make yourself known to Fr Jock by email or on the phone and ask for details of how to register on the parishes' roll.



'It is a time of planetary disruption and great change. The future is uncertain, and our present moment is filled with the potential for great suffering - but also great love. The global spread of the coronavirus has revealed to all the true nature of humanity's interconnectedness; even as we isolate ourselves from each other, we do so in loving solidarity for the protection of society's most vulnerable people. There's a sense that we're all in this together - every continent, country, class, religion, race, age, or gender. We're all subject to this crisis. Suffering has an ability to pull you into oneness.' (Richard Rohr)

**SUNDAY MASS THIS SUNDAY ONLINE AT 11am –
live-streamed from the Prayer Room in the Parish House.**

The web address will appear as the top post on our Facebook page -

www.facebook.com/StJohnsAndStMaryMagdalenes

and also as the top post on

www.stjohnsandstmarymagdalenes.com/news

The Mass will then be available as a recording on both addresses and on the St Mary Magdalene's website.

For details and livestream links for our weekday Masses, please see the back of the Sunday Plus.

Children's Liturgy – Arlene Lauder writes: 'Please join us this Sunday morning for a **Zoom Children's Liturgy session which will be starting around 11:15 am**. To join in please send your email address to me at Lauder.82@btinternet.com Please note that we will automatically send the Zoom link by email to everyone who has joined us before.'

A New Initiative - After Mass Teas and Coffees on Sunday During Lockdown

Fr Jock and Deacon Eddie write: 'While many of us have managed – in a sense, at least - to keep connected with other parishioners of both parishes during the lockdown through the live-streaming of Mass, more than a few of us will admit to missing the chatting and sharing informally with everyone that tea and coffee after Mass offers.'

So.....would anyone be willing to host a Zoom session after our 11am Sunday Mass? And to have a tea/coffee and a chat with whoever else wishes to join us? It's certainly something both of us would like to join in on...

If you are interested in hosting this from your house, or are interested in joining in one of these calls (even if you've never experienced Zoom before), please email stjohnsandstmarymagdalenes@gmail.com or send a private message to facebook.'

On Friday between 9.20 and 9.55am there will be **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament** (livestreamed)

DO YOU KNOW OF ANYONE WHO WISHES TO RECEIVE THE NEWSLETTER ONLINE?



Over the past few weeks many of our parishioners from St John's and St Mary Magdalene's have been receiving the newsletter electronically.

If you know someone who would like to receive a copy each week (please check with them first!) let us know and we can add them onto our distribution list during this time. If you do not wish to receive an electronic version and are being sent one at the moment, please let us know.

**Keep up
to date**

NOT EVERYTHING IS CANCELLED

**SUN IS NOT CANCELLED
SPRING IS NOT CANCELLED
RELATIONSHIPS ARE NOT CANCELLED
LOVE IS NOT CANCELLED
READING IS NOT CANCELLED
DEVOTION IS NOT CANCELLED
MUSIC IS NOT CANCELLED
IMAGINATION IS NOT CANCELLED
KINDNESS IS NOT CANCELLED
CONVERSATIONS ARE NOT CANCELLED
HOPE IS NOT CANCELLED**



THE PARISHES IN A TIME OF CRISIS - Caring for Each Other

A Message from our Parishes' St Vincent de Paul Conference

'Have you been financially hammered by the Covid 19 crisis? Have you lost your job or your business and have no financial reserves left? Are you unable to feed your family? The SVP might be able to help. Please **either text 07752 682 213** or **email** the parish house office on stjohnsandstmarymagdalenes@gmail.com with your **phone number, name and address** and a member of the Saint Vincent de Paul will get back to you within 48 hrs.'

Our PEP (Parish Emergency Planning) Group is meeting regularly to develop and put into practice plans for pastoral, spiritual and liturgical care in these very new circumstances.....
We would be so grateful if people were willing to put forward ideas for us to implement in the weeks ahead – remember from last week's newsletter what a parish in Lancaster has been doing: ...

'Our main Facebook page is the central constant heartbeat of communal prayer: we mobilised daily Adoration, Mass and a 6pm thought for the day or Divine Mercy on livestream from early on. In addition, we have Facebook ministry sub-groups: a Children's Corner (an interactive RE lesson based on the scripture of the day), a Prayer Corner (teaching about how to pray and sharing experiences), Liturgy of the Word group (bringing the Scripture of the day alive with Lectio Divina), a Music Ministry group (teaching people how to pray through music, both praise and worship, and more traditional). We also have an outreach service of Guardian Angels (an army of phone 'befrienders', phone 'prayer buddies' and physical errand runners with access to the foodbanks and our own Food Club. The prayer angels also pray for the sick and parish intentions, with weekly Zoom prayer sessions - usually the Rosary). While it is challenging to sing together on Zoom, our choir are working on pieces individually, which a tech member then edits together on YouTube.' **WHAT INITIATIVE MIGHT YOU SUGGEST?**

OUR COVID PASTORAL CARE GROUP

is wondering if you know of anyone inadvertently missed out who would like

- Regular phone contact
- Buying and delivering shopping
- Collection and delivery of medication
- Delivery of the weekly newsletter

If so, please do not hesitate to pass their details to Father Jock or to our co-ordinator, Gary Zoltie (email: garyzoltie@hotmail.com or phone 07768647923).

Parish Finances and Coronavirus

A Message from the diocese: *'We have been asked how people can continue to support their parish when we cannot put money in the plate at church. If your income has diminished because of the crisis, **please do not** feel obliged to contribute at this time. If your income is secure, **the best option would be to set up a standing order** (if your circumstances change, these can be amended/cancelled). If you have online banking you can set up a standing order form quickly using the parish sort code and account number. If you don't have online banking, we have standing order forms available which you can complete, sign and post to your bank (using the branch address on your cheque book or bank statement). Alternatively, you can donate using electronic banking.*

The Parishes' account details are:

St Mary Magdalene's:

Sort Code: 80-18-31

Account Number: 00277159

Account name – **See below**

St John's:

Sort Code: 80 – 46 – 53

Account Number: 10765768

Account name – St John the Evangelist

Please include your name as the payment reference

There has been some confusion as regards setting up standing orders for St Mary Magdalene's. This has been investigated – Jean McNally writes: 'it looks like the format of "**Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh St Mary Magdalene Church**" should be used if one is completing a form and posting or handing in to the bank, while if a money transfer or Standing Order is being set up electronically, the recognised format is "**Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh03**". Let us hope that this works!'

SPONSORED SLIM

Fr Jock is reasonably pleased (though actually, to be honest, also slightly disappointed with himself – not enough scurrying around..) having lost 5lb in Lent in his Sponsored Slim (**to help support the Legho Young Christian Communities and the STEKA Children's Home in Malawi**)....and is looking forward to gathering the various generous pledges made...do somehow get them to the Parish House if that's possible...and **THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE HANDED IN ENVELOPES SO FAR.**

NOTICEBOARD

BETHANY CARE SHELTER

Jim Roarty writes: 'Because of the inadvisability of having the homeless sleeping in a shared dormitory, Bethany Christian Trust, along with Edinburgh City Council have managed to obtain the use of the Old Waverley Hotel in Princes Street, which will enable single room accommodation. Bethany have decided to keep the Night Shelter going for an extra two months till Monday 29 June and are seeking teams to provide the meal during the extended period.'



We would like to offer to help this important service but, as some of our volunteers are over 70 and others have underlying health problems which make it advisable for them to stay at home, we are short of volunteers. The actual process is that the meal is prepared in the kitchen at Bethany's premises at Gorgie then brought into the Old Waverley in insulated containers to be served to the homeless using the night shelter. **If you would**

like to volunteer for this valuable - and rewarding - service, please let me know your availability for the extended period from 4 May to 29 June. My contact details are: jimroarty4@gmail.com, tel 07719952472.

Full Protective Personal Equipment is available at the Old Waverley and the option exists, if you prefer, simply to help with the food preparation at Gorgie.'

FIONA MACPHERSON PILATES OFFERS FREE CLASSES DURING THE LOCKDOWN

Fiona writes: 'Greetings everyone! 🌞🧘👍'

Speaking to one of my fellow local volunteers this morning, **I realise that there may be many immobile or elderly people, who are pretty much housebound at the moment, who might like to do a gentle Pilates class but can't get up & down to/from the floor.**

So, I've decided to do a short (no longer than half hour) very gentle seated class on Saturday morning at 10am. At the moment I'm doing it as a one-off but the class will be recorded so can be used any time.

Participants will need a sturdy chair - eg a dining chair (preferably with no arms but you could work around that if necessary) or sturdy stool. Your feet should be able to touch the floor when sitting. Also have a small cushion or a folded up towel. If anyone wants to make it harder have a couple of tins of beans (or similar) handy. Don't worry if you forget any of that stuff as you can also do the exercises without it.

Please remember that you participate at your own risk and it's important to listen to your body & stop if you need to. Although you can see me, I can't see you so it's important to take responsibility for your well-being. Please don't work in pain or force anything & definitely stop if something doesn't feel right. Before participation in the live or recorded class can you please agree to the waiver below (just type "I agree" in the comments below).

Please feel free to share with any elderly or immobile family/friends/ neighbours.

Thank you ❤️'

<https://www.facebook.com/113519330281789/posts/129065132060542/?sfnsn=scwspmo&extid=BxR5uP52umKV67qT>

(Virtual Exercise Class Waiver:

I am aware of my own health and physical condition, and having knowledge that my participation in any exercise program may be injurious to my health, am voluntarily participating in a physical activity.

Having such knowledge, I hereby acknowledge this release, any representatives, agents and successors from liability for accidental injury or illness which I may incur as a result of participating in the said physical activity. I hereby assume all risks connected therewith and consent to participate in said program.

I agree to disclose any physical limitations, disabilities, ailments or impairments which may affect my ability to participate in said fitness program.

Please comment online "I AGREE" 👍 indicating that you have read and consented to this waiver.)

*Fiona has also been doing **free short 30-40 min Pilates classes** a couple of times a week since lockdown started **for the more able bodied**. They've all been recorded and can be found on her Fiona Macpherson Pilates FB page if anyone wants to use them... 'different levels of challenge - generally a Tuesday class is more challenging and a Friday more chilled. 😊'*

Christian Meditation Online

‘Experience the joy of God’s healing presence during Christian meditation this special Lent. As long as the lock-down lasts, we meditate on Skype on Wednesdays at 7 p.m. and Fridays at 7.30 p.m. The up-to-date schedule and connection instructions are here: <https://www.meetup.com/Christian-Meditation-Group/events/>
Contact info - mobile: 0771 777 2614 Facebook: <http://on.fb.me/1cuO5QJ>’

Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline (24 hours) : ☎0800 027 1234

Acquire the habit of speaking to God as if you were alone with Him, familiarly and with confidence and love, as to the dearest and most loving of friends.

St Alphonsus Ligouri

PARISH REGISTER

Please pray for those who have died recently: Bill Cheyne, Sr Mary Steedman (of St Catherine’s Convent, Lauriston), Bridie Doherty, Delia Kennedy and Michael Goldschmidt.

Please pray for those whose anniversaries occur around this time: Fr Tom Henessy, Margot Tweedie, Mollie Brogan, Teresa Cannon, Owen Connarty and Anne Brennan

St John’s

Apr.26:- Margaret Connelly (2003); **Apr.27:-** Mary Robertson (1983); James Passmore (1978); William Corrigan; Hans Janik; **Apr.28:-** Teresa Cannon (2018); Margot Tweedie (2013); Christopher Rourke (1995); **Apr.29:-** Iain Wilson (2008); Marion Holligan (2002); Keith Rostant (20010; Jean Flucker (1995); Alexander Hunter (1968); **May 1:-** Mollie Brogan (2002); Catherine Tracy (1992); Owen Connarty (1973); Patrick Taylor (1952); **May 2:-** Anne Brennan (2014); Alexander Wallace (2010); Joseph Cunningham (1991); Alexander Durkin (1940); Marjory Gilchrist

St Mary Magdalene’s

Apr.28:- Stan Brown (2000); **Apr.29:-** George Cockburn (1995); **May 1:-** John Spence (1995)

Sick Parishioners - St. John’s: Susan O’Hara, David Reid, Molly Lugton, Jamie Clark, Sheila and Pat Tansey, Frank Logan, Charlotte McGregor, Betty Dougal, Anne Thomson, Eileen Brown, Mike Noonan, Sarah McManus, Sheila Alexander, Patricia Lawler, Mike Burns, Sr Jennifer Lindsay, Ernie Moran, Maureen Low, Pat Hunter, Dolores Jones, Alan Blyth, Mary Slight, Marie White, Cathy Walls, Anna Butler, Mary Phair, Sara Alkahankni, Rose Thornton, Kitty Dykes, Norman Telfer, Philip Jamieson, Guilio Crolla, Alf Macnamara, Stan McKay, Hugh Shannon, Maureen Lawrie, Mary Grady, Kathie Gallagher, Erin Corbett, Roz Byers, Marie Angela Crolla and Lorraine Syme.

Sick Parishioners - St. Mary Magdalene’s: Ann Carruthers, Isobel Phillips, Denis Davidson, Sam Burns, Ella Ayers, Margaret Duffy, Maria Scott Jnr, Louise Gorman, Ann Dockrell, Elizabeth Mackail, John Prior, Sheila Service, John Newell, Ray Donnelly, Michael McPhilipps, Agnes Harvey, Bridget Malone, Charles Malcolm, Margaret Ryan, Jacqueline Hannan, Chris English, Julie Keegan, Rose McKay, Laurie Wallace, Annie Watson, David O’Donnell, Andrew Banks, Jude Ferguson, and Mary & James Muir.

Please pray for sick friends and relatives of parishioners, including: Andrew Franklin, Gerry Mulvenna, Frank Palmer, Mairi Wilson, Louise Short, Paul Henderson, Ellen Green, Andrew Preston, Celine Diniz, Jamie Mitchell, Eunice Macdonald, Peter Bromley, Audrey Burgess, Kathleen Cawley, Margo Law, Misia Jack, Hannah Muldoon, Emma Bromet, Margaret Lee, Joan Bonnar, Mekala Osborne, Jean Nelson, Frances Green, Felicity McCluskey, Stephen Fernie, Maureen Henderson, Edward Caulfield, Mike Enfield, Anthony Finnerty, Savannah McDonald, Pat Dignan, Sharon Anderson, Igor Rekowski, Peter Hanley, Hazel Marshall, Sr Veronica Marshall, Martin Doherty, Maureen Connolly, Diana Hibbert, Joseph Daly, Roksana Moczulstra, Joan Brooks, Sr May Lewis, Mary Turnbull, Stuart Falconer, Jake Jorden, George Collins, Ena McCann, John Donnelly, Noel Flanagan and young Ray Donovan Syme.

Offertory Collections	St Mary Magdalene	St John the Evangelist
19 April 2020	£282.00 (including Gift Aid of £20.00) and Direct Debits - £50.00 – ie £332.00	£462.40 (including Gift Aid of £362.40) and Direct Debits –£371.40 -ie £833.80

Many thanks to all who have handed in their contributions to the Parish House, or who have arranged for them to be received by direct debit or standing order.

SCIAF – WEE BOX, BIG THANKS - Thank you to everyone in the two parishes for supporting SCIAF's Lenten Appeal. You can return your WEE BOXES to the Parish House anytime (or wait until it is safe to open our Churches again. Thank you once again for your great generosity. This year the SCIAF WEE BOX, BIG CHANGE Appeal has received UK Aid Match. This means that all public donations up until 20 May to the appeal will be doubled by the UK Government.

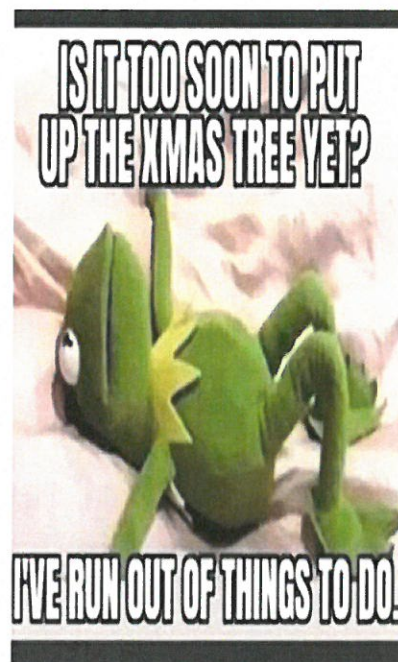
A Poem by Canon Andrew Monaghan reflecting on last week's Divine Mercy Sunday

Divine Mercy

In our frail and mixed-up human lives
 mercy was seen as what is given
 from the powerful to the weak.
 In Christ, however, we are taught
 that mercy is the love of God
 which gives us life in all its richness,
 embraces all our weakness,
 transforms all our frailty
 and surrounds our lives
 from early learning
 through good and bad decisions
 to the final passing
 that in peace or turmoil
 opens out to that eternal joy,
 which is life together
 in the God who is the source of life,
 and love and happiness.

YOUR HOROSCOPE THIS WEEK

 ARIES You'll be spending time in your home	 LIBRA You'll be spending time in your home
 TAURUS You'll be spending time in your home	 SCORPIO You'll be spending time in your home
 GEMINI You'll be spending time in your home	 SAGITTARIUS You'll be spending time in your home
 CANCER You'll be spending time in your home	 CAPRICORN You'll be spending time in your home
 LEO You'll be spending time in your home	 AQUARIUS You'll be spending time in your home
 VIRGO You'll be spending time in your home	 PISCES You'll be spending time in your home



PAUL GRAHAM

What are we praying for?

I've been getting texts on WhatsApp urging me not to worry and pray that everything will be okay, as God is 'in control' of the Covid-19 pandemic. Behind such sentiments there seems to be an assumption that God, being all-powerful, is able to zap the virus and make it go away. But God manifestly isn't making the virus go away and people are dying. So what are we realistically praying for? Is God, in fact, in control in the way we think he may be, or is something else going on?

Last night, I could hear noise in the street outside. When I looked, people had come to their front doors and were clapping. At first I thought it was just a spontaneous gesture, a moment of communal release of pent-up frustration at being cooped up all day. In fact, they were applauding the health workers – nurses, doctors and others – who daily are putting their lives at risk to help the sick and dying. I'd missed the announcement earlier in the day, or I would have joined in.

God was there, in the applause, in the gratitude shown towards those who make an act of self-sacrifice each day for the good of the community. That joy-filled clapping is one of the ways in which our prayers are being answered. It is a powerful statement, even by people who may not believe it personally, that the virus, part of our fallen world, does not have the last say; and that human goodness and love will triumph, and is at this moment triumphing, in spite of the continuing menace of Covid-19.

In northern Italy, the parishioners of Father Giuseppe Berardelli clubbed together to pay for him to have a ventilator as he lay sick in hospital with the virus. When he heard that a younger patient needed one, he gave him his – and died. As his coffin was being taken away for burial, people under lockdown came to their balconies and applauded. God was being glorified in the self-

sacrificial gesture of Father Giuseppe. That, too, is an answer to our prayers. That, too, is a statement that God is *present*, even in suffering and death. God's power was demonstrated in human weakness.

God is present in Lizzie from down the road who left a note at our front door asking if we needed anything; in the woman who said 'hello' from her doorstep – two metres apart – as I passed by on my permitted daily walk the other day; in all the kind texts and phone calls I've received from people wishing me well under self-isolation; in the police who continue to make sure we're safe; in the lorry drivers who deliver our food to the supermarkets. The list goes on.

Our prayers are being answered in all this, as we become more aware that underlying our brokenness and selfishness as human beings, there is something else of greater power at work in the world: the power of love, which is stronger than whatever the virus can throw at us. For those with faith, it is the power of God at work *in us*, in the world.

God is not a puppet-master, 'up there', pulling strings and doing things to intervene and stop bad stuff happening. If God were such a God, why did he allow the Black Death to take place that devastated medieval Europe? Why did God not intervene during the Second World War to stop the Holocaust? Indeed, why allow such a war to take place at all? And yet we go on believing that God will find us a parking place. He's not that kind of God.

Etty Hillesum, a young Jewish woman from Holland, volunteered to work in a transit camp for deportees to Auschwitz, fully aware of what her own fate would eventually be. In spite of her initial unbelief and the suffering all around her, she found God in the camp and with it a deep interior peace. The seeming helplessness of God

under those circumstances became the stimulus for deep prayer. She writes in her diary: 'Alas, there doesn't seem to be much You Yourself can do about our circumstances, about our lives. Neither do I hold you responsible. You cannot help us, but we must help You and defend Your dwelling place inside us to the last'.

We believe in a God who came among us, Emmanuel, God-is-with-us. God in Christ is in the midst of the pandemic. He is trying to bring to an end to it in the hands of the nurses and doctors tending the sick. He is there in the researchers seeking to find a vaccine, and with the engineers designing and making ventilators to assist the chronically ill. He is with the families, some with little income as a result of the lockdown, struggling to keep the kids fed and entertained. He is with the half-million volunteers who signed up to assist with the National Health Service.

God is *there*, in those people. God is answering our prayers in them and in us as we open our hearts to him. God is even with those who don't believe in him. It doesn't matter. God can handle unbelief, and even rejection, as we well know, but he is still with us. Some of us may even go on to die, but God is still there having conquered death in Jesus. The virus does not have the last word: God does, and His is the glory.

That, I suggest, is the meaning of prayer during this pandemic. Just don't expect God to zap the virus to make it go away. But Christ *in us* will make it go away, eventually; and we pray that the world will be a better place after it. Instead of the virus triumphing, it will have been conquered by the selfless love of Christ at work in human beings. In the words of Etty, let us defend God's dwelling place inside us to the last.

Paul Graham OSA was formerly parish priest at St Joseph's, Broomhouse, Edinburgh.



Richard Leonard

God does not send plagues to teach us things, though we can learn from them

“Some Christians seem to have a very limited image of the Holy Trinity: nasty God the Father in heaven; sweet, lovely Jesus And the bird! While the creeds teach that there is one God in three persons, they act as one in creating, saving and inspiring. In John’s Gospel Jesus says he does nothing on his own (5:30), “the Father and I are one” (10:30); and “to have seen me is to have seen the Father” (14:9). Christians believe that Jesus came to fulfil the Old Testament; they believe, too, that everything in the Old Testament should be interpreted through the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

This matters when we come to understand the meaning of plagues and other natural disasters. For the peoples of the ancient world, if there was a flood, plague or pestilence then God was saying something through it. But in the Gospels Jesus never sends a plague, a natural disaster or turns anyone into a pillar of salt. If Jesus isn’t into murderous retribution, nor, if we take him at his repeated word, is God the Father. Jesus is the incarnate correction to false views of how God works in the world.

So, even through Covid-19’s origins are yet to be finally established, they have a natural explanation, and the way the virus has spread has been in measure the result of poor human decisions. God has not sent the pandemic upon us.

Wherever there is a local or a global catastrophe, whether it is the fire that destroyed the roof of Notre Dame or the spread of Aids, there are always some Christians who say that it has been sent as a punishment by God for various contemporary sins. This reveals a belief in God as a kind of extra-powerful figure ruling the universe, a chief executive who tolerates bad behaviour up to a point, but then his patience snaps and he stops the nonsense, sending a tsunami or a pandemic to remind us who is boss.

God as a vengeful tyrant is a neat if frightening solution to the deep pain in our lives: our suffering has to come from somewhere, and perhaps it is understandable that some seek the explanation that it is sent directly by God.

But there is a huge difference between God permitting evil in our world and God perpetrating such acts upon us. The Church teaches that the first proposition is

true, but not the second, although listening to some Christians talking about the coronavirus pandemic you would be forgiven for thinking it did. Because God wants us to be fully free, our world holds the possibility of our choosing evil; if it were otherwise, we would be marionettes. This is a world away from God directly causing suffering and destruction.

Just because sometimes people grow through pain and suffering, it does not mean God sent these things as a test: rather this growth is a testament to God accompanying us through every moment, inspiring us to be in solidarity with all God’s children, so that together we make the best decisions in the shadow of death and the valley of tears.

Nor does God send plagues to teach us things, though we can learn from them, and we are learning a lot right now about our delicate relationship with the created order and how poor choices made in one place can have unintended consequences in other places. We are also learning that the best response to natural disasters or health emergencies is transparency, good government, honest reporting, human ingenuity, responsible citizenship, and valuing the common good; we are also learning how extraordinarily resilient some of us are in the face of tragedy.

How can I be so confident that God is not deadly by nature? Because the God revealed in Jesus Christ is not a tyrant but a lover, a God prepared to go to any lengths – even to give up his life on the Cross – to save us, even though we do not deserve it. John 1:5 says, “God is light, in him there is no darkness.” If that is true, plagues and pandemics cannot be part of an arsenal of weapons deployed by an angry God to punish us or our selfishness and greed.

Spiritual sanity in these difficult days rests in seeing that every moment of every day God does what he did on Good Friday: not intervening to prevent humanity killing Jesus, but not allowing evil and despair to have the last word.

The power of amazing grace enables us to make the most of even the worst situations, to help each other in every way we can, and to let light and life have the last word. Easter Sunday is God’s response to Good Friday: life out of death.”

*Richard Leonard SJ is the author of What does it all mean?
A guide to living lives of faith, hope and love (Paulist Press).*