

Reflections on Well Being: Theological and Practical

The *Rule of Saint Benedict* divides the day into times of corporate and private prayer, spiritual reading, manual labour and rest. It is good for us, too, to have a **pattern and rhythm** to our days. We shouldn't spend all the time at the computer. Each day is enhanced with varied times of prayer, reflection and rest.

Sabbath keeping is the only commandment needing an explanation, and the reason is different in the two accounts. In Exodus 20, we keep it because God made it holy. In Deuteronomy 5, it's because the people are no longer slaves in Egypt. In other words, we keep the sabbath as a time to **pray** – to reconnect with God – and as a time to **play** – to do something without worrying whether it's achieving anything. Our lives are enriched by times of praying and times of playing. But a fear of not being useful means we rarely play!

In his work *On the Priesthood*, John Chrysostom writes: "The priest's wounds require greater help, indeed as much as those of all the people together ... because of heavy demands and extraordinary expectations associated with the pastoral office." We should not underestimate the great burdens that we are carrying during the Covid-19 outbreak. We need more than brief breaks. We need to wind down, **stop and relax** completely. Turn on the answering machine, put away the smartphone and shut the study door.

In the *Book of Common Prayer*, we confess: "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done". During this time, we mustn't let these words dishearten us. There will be things which we would normally do but which are now left undone. Provided no laws are broken, and neither you nor anyone else is put at risk, it may be fine to **leave things undone**. Don't add guilt to all the other worries.

The writer of Proverbs reminds us: "Some friends play at friendship, but a true friend sticks closer than one's nearest kin." (Prov. 18.24) In ministry, we encounter people in need who are anxious or sick. Others may be friendly but demand our time and energy. So, it is vital that we **connect with life-giving people** – those who make us laugh, who inspire us, who understand us, with whom we can be genuinely honest. They may be family, friends or clergy colleagues. Phone, email or use video conferencing to link up.

In John 4, Jesus asks the Samaritan woman for a drink of water. If our Lord needs to **ask for help**, then so do we. We may require practical help with IT, liturgical resources, someone to listen to us, or an extra pair of helping hands. Use the resources listed below or ask your archdeacon. Don't struggle on alone.

Finally, we remember Saint Paul's words to the Christians in Corinth: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12.9) We will only get through this time in God's grace and God's power. We are not superheroes. **It doesn't all depend on us**. Turn to God in faith, hope and love.

Resources

St Albans Diocese is providing useful resources and links on the website:

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/living-gods-love-at-all-times/#Well-Being>

The Church of England provides resources, including liturgy and practical guidance on the website:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

The Support In your Ministry (SIM) scheme is now available to all in ministry, whether currently using the scheme or not, who would value a conversation with someone in complete confidence:

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/support-in-your-ministry/>

Use the Clergy Counselling Service in confidence for anything troubling you personally, in your relationships or arising from lockdown:

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/clergy-counselling-service/>