

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord my strength and my Redeemer. Amen.

In the past few months, since the start of the corona-virus pandemic, I've noticed how much the Bible passages have relevance to our current situation and in today's Gospel reading from Matthew we see that again. Firstly, we come across a crowd of people harassed and helpless, troubled, a community divided.

During these recent times, I'm sure we have all felt like one of the crowd, both physically and mentally. We've felt anxious, lonely and isolated, we've been separated and divided, scattered about in our own homes, missing family, friends, our Church community, living in the shadow of all the suffering and death that this virus has brought to our world.

The reading goes on. Jesus had compassion for the crowds; they were like a flock of sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus wants to be their shepherd, He sees there needs are urgent and it's time to call His disciples, "the sent ones", into action.

A few months ago, as we began to realise how urgent the corona-virus situation was, people were called into action. We've seen love and compassion pouring out in the dedication of frontline and keyworkers; we've seen all the good work being carried out by volunteers helping people in their neighbourhoods. We've seen Jesus and His disciples at work.

As Christians we know that Jesus is by our side, He loves us and He's right in the middle of this with us. He is our shepherd, our healer, our hope. He wants to lead us through this difficult time, but He also needs our help too.

Now that the lockdown is starting to ease and we begin this "new normal", that good work we have seen, needs to continue, as we face very challenging times ahead, in our local communities, our country and the world. Now more than ever we are called to mission, to carry on the work of Jesus. We need to be His feet, His hands, His voice and His listening ear, to spread the light and hope that knowing Him brings, to share His love, and very importantly to pray.

We are now most certainly, the “sent ones”, and although like the crowds in our passage today, we ourselves are in a community physically divided right now, we are all still very much together as one body in Christ Jesus, united in prayer, love and service for all of God’s people.

I’d just like to finish with this prayer of St Theresa of Avila.

*Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

Amen.