



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Wednesday Healing Eucharist 29th April 2020

In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The American psychologist Abraham Maslow famously created a diagram called the Hierarchy of Needs. He asked the question, what does every human being need to survive and thrive? He drew a pyramid, divided into layers. He started at the bottom of the pyramid with basic physiological needs, food, water, warmth, rest. The layers move up the pyramid until at the top is self actualisation, achieving ones full potential, including creative activities.

Maslow created this in the 1940's; since then, most of us have added wifi and phone battery to the most basic level, even more so in lockdown when we depend on it so much for work and school and meeting family and friends.

One step up from food, water and warmth is security and safety; someone has pointed out recently, that the current pandemic threatens those basic needs of safety and security in a way that many of us with relatively comfortable lives haven't experienced in quite this way before. According to Maslow, security and safety are essential layers low down the pyramid before reaching self actualisation. So if you are feeling guilty that during lockdown you haven't so far become a gourmet cook, read Proust, painted the Sistine chapel on your kitchen ceiling, taught your children Mandarin, or achieved a six pack, don't let the motivational gurus on social media fill you with guilt. The security and safety layer might be taking up most of your energy. For some reason, the lockdown experience is exhausting. Living life on a screen, having the energy provided by human interaction removed, listening to worrying news bulletins, attempting to entertain children, facing the jobs in the house that one has been putting off for years, losing ones routine, uncertainty, anxiety, loneliness. All these are exhausting and disorientating. One cant imagine what it must be like for those on the front line at this time.

Today's saint, Catherine of Siena, experienced a time of plague during her life. She actually discovered a calling to care for the sick and needy; visiting hospitals, distributing alms. She is the patron saint of nurses, and sick people, amongst others. 'Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire' she said. And there are many who are on fire at this time, following their vocation to care, to heal, to research, to counsel. They are saving lives, they are pouring their love into the common good, and some, as we remembered yesterday, have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

In today's gospel, Jesus calls us to concentrate on simplicity. The basic needs. 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest'. 'You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants'. Rest is at the basic level of Maslow's diagram. Jesus wants to lift those heavy burdens we are carrying, and give us his rest. Name those burdens one by one and give them to him. There may be no immediate answer but we will not be carrying them alone. And maybe too we need to let go all the unanswered questions that scurry around in our heads and allow ourselves simple childlike faith. To rest in the presence of the Lord. Psalm 131 puts it like this, in the modern Message translation of the Bible 'God, I'm not trying to rule the roost, I don't want to be king of the mountain. I haven't meddled where I have not business or fantasized grandiose plans. I've kept my feet on the ground, I've cultivated a quiet heart. Like a baby content in its mother's arms, my soul is a baby content. Wait Israel, for God. Wait with hope. Hope now; hope always! Amen.