

# February Reflection

Mental Wellbeing – ‘I make all things new’ (Revelation 21:5)

Our prayer theme for this month is mental wellbeing. The term “mental health” can be misunderstood, but the fact is that each of us has mental health in the same way we have physical health. At times, our physical health is good, and sometimes it is poor. The same is true about our mental health; perhaps we aren’t even aware of mental health, and life goes on without much thought, in a particularly happy or resilient place, where we are able to face challenges effectively, but there may also be times when we become aware that we can’t.

The charity ‘Mind’ states that “one in four people will experience a mental health problem each year in the UK”. A quarter of the population will face a mental health problem this year, making it highly likely that will include someone you know: a friend, a colleague, a family member, a fellow parishioner, your parish priest, or even you. Sadly, in the past, phrases like ‘pull yourself together’ and ‘don’t worry about it’, which often come from a place of sympathy, have had the opposite effect, only increasing a sense of shame or feeling of worthlessness. Like any illness, it can shake our faith; we can feel separated from God, abandoned or unworthy, and our prayer life can seem impossible. This is normal and part of our human frailty. The Book of Psalms is full of God’s people struggling with stress, anxiety, depression, and feeling worthless or unlovable; the psalmists speak out their separation from God, their lack of joy and loneliness. This is part of what it means to be human and is, therefore, part of the story of God and His people, salvation history. God acts through times of both good and poor mental health.

It is important that, as a Church, we remove the taboo around mental health; talking more openly about our mental wellbeing, and helping those facing issues and problems to know God’s love for them, especially in our parish communities. As Christians we are called to speak hope into despair. The short piece of scripture we are reflecting on ‘**I make all things new**’ comes from the Book of Revelation, the final book of the Bible. After all the terrors of the end of the world, and the brokenness of life, the promised victory arrives – the new heaven and the new earth come into being – faith and hope are replaced with the living reality of knowing God face to face. We read this quotation in its context:

*“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.” And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” (Revelation 21:1-5).*

Central to our faith is a message of hope. There will be a time when there are no more tears and no more suffering. This hope is built on the central truth that God is not only present, making His home amongst us, in the good times, but that God made His home amongst us in suffering.

In the person of Jesus, God experienced the fullness of human suffering, our suffering. God is not a stranger to human pain.

In times of poor mental wellbeing it is important that we know, and then help others to know, that Jesus is with us and that He is working in and through us to bring about this new heaven and new earth: that our suffering is united to His suffering, and Christ’s suffering is united to ours. Our faith tells us that there is hope, and that even now God is making all things new.

## Some things to consider this month

- HAVE I CHECKED IN WITH MY FRIENDS, MY FAMILY, FELLOW PARISHIONERS, MY PARISH PRIEST? WHO NEEDS ME TO BE WITH THEM IN THEIR TIME OF NEED?
- DO I KNOW THAT GOD IS WITH ME NOW, THAT HE LOVES ME, AND THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE IN MY PARISH WHO WANT ME TO KNOW THIS TOO?
- HAVE I PRAYED FOR ALL THOSE WHO ARE FACING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES?

## Four tips for when we find it hard to pray:

- REPEAT SIMPLE SHORT PRAYERS – ‘JESUS I TRUST IN YOU’, ‘JESUS MERCY, MARY HELP.’
- THE ROSARY, OR OTHER TRADITIONAL PRAYERS, WHERE THE WORDS ARE GIVING FOR US.
- LISTEN TO CHRISTIAN MUSIC, SUCH AS PRAISE AND WORSHIP MUSIC, MUSIC FROM TAIZÉ, OR GREGORIAN CHANT.
- SPEND TIME IN ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT, OR BEFORE THE TABERNACLE IN CHURCH, WITHOUT HAVING TO SAY WORDS: KNOW SIMPLY THAT GOD IS PHYSICAL PRESENT WITH YOU.

Please see an example of a prayer you could pray:

*Lord Jesus,  
I know that you have felt the fullness of human suffering: be with me, and with my brothers and sisters who are suffering today. Help us to feel your presence more closely. Direct me to those who are suffering, and give me the words and the time to be a beacon of love and hope. Help all in this community to see that you are with us on good days and bad alike, and that one day there will be no more suffering, no more tears; for you make all things new.*

*Amen.*

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