

Whether the Weather Be Hot or Whether the Weather be Not

We've had some very cold days this Winter – not much snow so far, but very hard frosts, day after day, sometimes never melting in my garden which is shaded on all sides. Such days can be very beautiful. Mist hanging over the river or swirling among the trees creates an air of mystery. The sun shining on hoar frost illuminates frail twigs and mighty boughs alike with clear, crystalline light, bright white against a deep blue sky. Rose hips and the few remaining deeply coloured autumn leaves glow in the freezing air. My dog Tommy rolls in the frosty grass and, as the mud is frozen, we come home from our walks in the woods with clean fur and shoes.

On the other hand, the heating is running all the time and the gas bill is getting bigger and some days, for all the best efforts of my new boiler, it remains decidedly chilly indoors. Pity the homeless on nights like this. Remember those who can't afford to heat their homes. If your budget is limited, heating really must be one of your highest priorities, along with food. Don't get sick by trying to save money.

In the cities, too, this cold, still air has been associated with dangerously high levels of air pollution. We need to do something about emissions whether from vehicles, domestic heating or factory chimneys.

A lot of people seem to be despairing. Many of us are worried about what is happening on the international stage, seemingly intractable problems of conflict and hardship. Many of us worry about our own country and where it's going. Some of us may feel overwhelmed by our own personal problems – ill health, unemployment, family or money troubles. I think many people feel that there is a lack of leadership where it matters and are troubled by rapid changes in social attitudes which seem to undermine the values which provide us with our sense of security and on which we have depended for our well-being and the well-being of society in general.

On one very cold day, an iron frost gripping the soil, I noticed how many young plants there are coming through – forget-me-nots, daffodils, some beginning to form buds – and the snowdrops are already in bloom. Spring is coming. The Winter will end. There is always hope.

By hope, I don't mean a mindless optimism, an unfounded belief that something will turn up. I'm not blind to the reality of the troubles we face or might have to confront in the future. My hope is grounded. I know that the forget-me-nots and the daffodils will bloom. The days will get longer. It will become less cold and even warm. My hope is grounded on what I know. Rather, it is grounded on Whom I know. Having genuine faith in the living God, I have every reason to hope, every confidence. As my grandmother used to say, "We know not what the future holds, but we know Who holds the future."

Good Friday is real. Jesus died in agony on the Cross, having been betrayed by one friend, abandoned and denied by the others, lied about, mocked and flogged with a Roman punishment whip which was in itself capable of killing people. We may well have our own Good Fridays to face, when everything is dark, all is lost and even God is apparently absent. In those times we know that we can pray to God through Jesus because Jesus understands through His own experience what we are going through, the very worst we can suffer.

Easter too is real. Good defeats evil. Life is stronger than death. Jesus is the Victor over the devil. Jesus is with us in the way of the Cross. Eternal life is the end (in both senses) of that path and the path itself (believe it or not), grasped through putting our faith in Jesus and holding His hand on the road we walk in our lives. We rightly speak of the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life – not mere optimism or a groundless belief, but sure and certain hope, based on a true and lively faith.

Roger Knight, Rector of Cuxton and Halling.

Good Friday (14th April): 10.00 Family Service at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton, 12.00 Three Hour Devotion at St John the Baptist Halling. (You may come for all or part of the three hour service.)
Easter Day (16th April): Holy Communion 8.00 in Jubilee Hall, 9.30 at St Michael's & 11.00 at St John's.