

Covid 19 dreams continue. This morning's was of a carefully prepared liturgy falling apart because of a flood of people at the door, including the Archbishop of Westminster who later morphed into two Anglican prelates; and the mass of people, at first driven out then pouring back in again to not only occupy all the seats but to visit every corner of the chapel as if we were a long-awaited tourist destination: Bournemouth beach without the beer and the beachwear. My part in this was to stare from the sidelines, still in civvies and without my prepared sermon. Rising panic wakes me up and the nightmare recedes.

And we are, in a sense, all struggling to wake from a terrible dream, a period seemingly unreal, at times, only too real, at others. All sorts of conflicting messages accompany this awakening. We are faced with a mass of detail and yet much imprecision: it's trial and error for all of us. Today is our first Eucharist in this chapel for well over three months and we've carefully negotiated a way of operating which we think will keep the two communities safe and provide at least a partial template for later when our regular congregation can at last attend. But it's a work in progress – as is life. What Jesus holds out for us, is not so much rest as respite care: doing nothing while he does all the work; but rest as living a life within God's care, led and upheld by the Spirit of God which is 'created' by the love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father. This is the template for life on earth upheld by God, within the process of God, subject to God's creative power, energised by love. But in order for this to work we have to 'come off our high horses' to allow room for God's creative Spirit to have its say. It's the tension between Law and Spirit all over again: a way of finding out how to make this tension creative where Law and Spirit are mutually supporting, informing one another. This is what it is to live a spiritual life, not as opposed to the material or the life of flesh and blood, but as opposed to an earthly life not upheld by reference to God, that is, to the life of grace. The whole point of the Eucharist is to celebrate and give thanks for just such an earthly life, lived to the full by Christ so that we too can live it to the full. 'Spiritual Communion' can only take us so far, but now we welcome the return of a more enfleshed reality and look forward to an even more fully enfleshed reality when all can be present, both the regular and irregular members of Christ – all, that is, who look forward to God being all in all.

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