

ST JOANS LIFE IN THE SPIRIT PRAYER GROUP

Reflection on 2020

At the beginning of 2020 we made the following statement:

This year (our 40th anniversary, we seek to build on our strengths (praise and worship; community and fellowship; receiving peace and encouragement) and also to renew our reliance on the guidance of the Holy Spirit by being open to the power of God's Word; by praying with authority and developing the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and by focussed intercession for key needs..... and who knows what else! We are excited about what the Lord is going to do in and through our group this year.

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." Isaiah 43:18-19

We didn't realise just how prophetic this was! The Lord is indeed doing a very new thing! Not that we see the current crisis as coming directly from God. We know that in the beginning, God made Creation and pronounced it good. But when Adam and Eve sinned, evil entered the world, and this disorder even affected nature, creating the possibility for natural disasters, which are not "acts of God" but the result of the corruption of nature.

While God did not send the suffering that results from natural disasters like the Coronavirus pandemic, in His Providence, He uses suffering to draw us closer to Him — the God who sent His only Son Jesus to bear the full weight of evil through his crucifixion.

God allows natural disasters to happen because, in his infinite wisdom, he knows that they can serve his purpose of bringing souls to eternal life. Out of evil God brings good: 'We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him' (Rom 8:28). Much good can come out of the immense suffering involved in natural disasters. People are led to realize how fragile their life is, how uncertain their days on earth, and they are often moved to repent of their sins and to draw closer to God in trustful prayer.

And so, our prayer in these difficult days is a prayer of trust in God: trust that He has everything under control; trusting His promise that He is with us in our trials; trusting in the victory Jesus has already won through his Cross and Resurrection.

Our prayer group has continued to meet online via zoom and, while some regular attendees have not been able to join us, we have gained other regulars, including some former members who had moved to other parts of the country; friends of friends, etc.

Although meetings are not quite the same and of course we miss the real contact, we have at least been able to continue to worship God and pray together, and help to support each other during this difficult time. So we continue to: ***"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*** (1Thessalonians 5:16-18)