REVD CANON SIMON CADE

ACTING DIOCESAN SECRETARY

I made a joke that on my first day as Diocesan Secretary I closed Church House, on the second day we stopped public worship in all our churches, and on the third day we closed the schools. It’s a good line and got plenty of likes on twitter. It got worse, because then we told the over 70s, clergy and lay, that their public ministry had to cease until the isolation policy for vulnerable groups allowed otherwise. There aren’t any jokes about that one.

Last Friday afternoon I was on my own in Church House putting things from my desk into a box, I turned the lights out, turned the alarm on, and locked the door. A memorable first week. I haven’t cried yet, but there is a sadness about some of this, and I think that in time I may well weep for what will not now be. I am sad that my year as Diocesan Secretary will not be what I hoped. And that is before the news starts getting really bad, there may well be much more weeping before this is over.

I admit to that sadness, those who know me well can see it anyway. I also admit to fear, as always fear of what is yet unknown. How bad will it get? What more will we lose and who will we lose? Will I be strong enough? Will I make mistakes? Will I be faithful?

On the Saturday, the church remembered Thomas Cranmer. The martyrs of the church put some perspective on my year not panning out as I thought it was going to. Then the readings at Morning Prayer included Hebrews 8 and the idea of the earthly sanctuary being a “sketch and shadow” of the heavenly sanctuary. Sometimes God has to try unusually hard for me to get God’s point.

My strength will not be enough; God’s strength endures. I will make mistakes in these difficult days and it will be too hard for me; God’s mercy is without limit and God’s grace is freely and abundantly given. I will ask “why?” and struggle to find an answer; my fragile faith and ministry will be just a sketch and shadow of the faithfulness of Godin whose name I serve.

As we refrain from embracing and find new ways to be distant, God reaches out to us and holds us close. As the church changes out of all recognition, God walks with us. As we lock things up and close things down, God unlocks and unfolds a new future and is faithful in love.

Thanks be to God that we are called to serve and to worship in times such as these.