

A Year of Lockdown

23 March 2021 marks the first anniversary of the national Coronavirus lockdown across the UK. It is hoped that this day will be marked by many as a national day of remembrance.

[Marie Curie](#) have produced resources in several languages to help us remember, including resources for schools and young people.

Many people have lost a loved one, or a dear friend. There are few of us who have not been touched by bereavement, but none of us has come this far without some sense of loss or pain or grief. We have lost a year of contact with family, missed hugging our friends, missed seeing our colleagues. We are in the main sociable creatures who need physical contact to thrive.

Some of us may feel that we have been wandering in the wilderness, uprooted from our usual patterns of life, bereft of comfort and unable to connect with our churches and church family. It is somehow fitting that this national day of remembrance is during the solemn season of Lent. In a time of reflection and repentance.

Lent has traditionally been a time of fasting, of giving something up. This year we could all be forgiven for perhaps wondering what else could we give up? Our frontline workers in health, social care, retail, farming, fishing, ministry, have given up selfishness and put the needs of others before themselves. Some have given up retirement and gone back to work to help out. And for some others work has been more frenetic and busier than ever, whilst others have found themselves furloughed for months at a time or have sadly lost their jobs.

Whatever our personal circumstances, we can all pause for a moment to reflect on the past year and what that has meant for us individually and collectively as Christians. I have been using two books to help me to do just that over the past weeks.

The first our Diocesan Lent Book, *Opening Our Lives* by Trystan Owain Hughes, whose daily devotionals are encouraging us to "...look across as well as up", to open our eyes, ears, hearts, ways, actions, and pain to God, and to open our world to God's hope. At times joyful, at times painful, always challenging with each day digging deeper into our inner resources and opening us up to help us let more of God in.

The second a book sent to me by a friend and colleague, who I value greatly even though we have never physically met because they started working with us during lockdown. This book has inspired them through the years and it is also inspiring me. *Say It To God*, by Luigi Gioia was the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2018. A beautiful book that helps with our prayer life, not least by acknowledging that prayer is not always easy, "...we struggle with distractions, anxious thoughts and commitments". We journey with the writer through prayers from scripture – the psalms, those of Old Testament Prophets and the prayers of Jesus.

Our Lenten journeys this year may be different and difficult, with times of sorrow, grieving and loss. Jesus' own journey to the cross was filled with sorrow, grieving and loss too. Maybe we will look back at this time and reflect on a closer walk with God because of our pain. And maybe looking forward to the joy and glory of Easter this year, will be an extra special moment, filled with the Holy Spirit. As Pope John Paul II reminded us "We do not pretend that life is all beauty. We are aware of darkness and sin, of poverty and pain. But we know Jesus has conquered sin and passed through his own pain to the glory of the Resurrection. And we live in the light of his Paschal Mystery – the mystery of his Death and Resurrection. 'We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song!'"