

**Prayers to Bless our Togetherness
in a Pandemic that holds us apart**

by Fr James Lyons

The Herod Virus

Jesus, Mary, Joseph.
To escape the wrath of Herod,
you isolated yourselves in Egypt,
far from the support of family and friends.
We, too, are separated from many loved ones.
Our "Herod" is a virus putting all at risk.
Border closures prevent travel,
making reunion impossible.
You know the anguish of separation and
how the unknown gives birth to fear.
Strengthen the *aroha* that binds us,
the *wairua* that holds us close.
Gentle us in this time of uncertainty
to believe, to trust, to hope. Amen.
[Matthew 2:13-15]

Far Away

You are far away, my friend,
for the good of your health
and mine and everyone else's.
It hurts, of course,
for there is a longing to be together,
even while this pandemic hovers
and threatens lives, and keeps you
far away.
How wonderful, though, we can
hold one another in prayer
where isolation dissolves
and faith unites
and nothing is very far away.

Socially Distant

Mary,
with your sister and some others,
you stood on Calvary
at a distance,
helpless with grief as Jesus died.
There are many today
in this pandemic crisis
who cannot be with those they love
who lie ill, perhaps dying.
All must remain *socially distant,*
unable to hold or even touch
lest the virus spreads.
Be with those who feel so helpless.
Comfort the healthy and the sick.
Ease the stress that distance imposes.
Open us to the strength you found
and to the peace no distance can disturb.
[Mark 15:40-41; John 19:25-27]

Together Apart

This evening, Lord, I'm having a glass of bubbles.
I'm drinking with my family in mind.
Several seas separate us.
We've been apart since the first Lockdown
when *bubbles* took on a different meaning.
We're told not to expect borders
to reopen *any time soon.*
Yes, we are sad, but also hopeful,
for we know you are with us.
You sit with me and you sit with my family.
Raise a glass with us tonight.
Keep us together always. but especially,
while we are apart.
Amen.

Do Not Be Afraid

Many times, Jesus,
you urged your friends not to be afraid.
I need to hear these words – indeed
the whole world needs to hear them –
as the siege under Covid-19 continues.
We fear a virus we cannot control,
a virus we cannot see,
a virus that separates us from one another.
Help us to trust your words and your presence
to know in our hearts that
we need not be afraid.
Amen.

Trusting In Love

*O Lord, be gracious to us;
we wait for you.
Be our arm in the morning,
our salvation in time of trouble.
[Isaiah 33]*

We echo the words of Isaiah,
your prophet, Lord, in difficult times,
always clinging to hope and
trusting in your love.
As pandemic grips our world and
separates us from one another,
embrace us with your tenderness and mercy.
United in your care,
may our lives reflect your loving kindness.
We pray in Jesus' name.
Amen.