



Father Robbie Low

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

2nd April 2020

Today it will be two weeks since I last celebrated a public mass in a church building with a congregation. The day was the feast of St. Joseph and I reflected that it was, perhaps, an appropriate day for such an unlooked for and unlikely event. Not even war has closed the churches but now, here we are, huddled down seeking to avoid the curse of the Chinese Flu, wary of our own health and careful for the safety of others. Across the continents the diktats of governments rule in a way unthinkable outside totalitarian states even a few weeks ago. Economies are being stripped and virtually nationalised in a way that could please only the admirers of Mao & Stalin. Strange times.

So perhaps St. Joseph was not a bad day to sign off one era and begin the new era of uncertainty. Joseph, whom you might, humanly speaking, have thought had enough problems dealing with his situation in the one horse northern town of Nazareth, suddenly finds himself elsewhere. Unlike us – whose movements are severely curtailed by the State – Joseph is commanded by the diktats of imperial Rome to travel south. Not a long way in our terms but a hundred miles with a heavily pregnant wife on the back of a donkey is a long haul for all three.

He assumes, quite reasonably, that, having complied with the Census (anathema to Israelites) he would shortly be on his way home. Not so. The advent of the Magi, the intelligence network of the paranoid Herod, the intervention of angels, sees him fleeing south with his precious cargo to avoid the peril of death. When he will see the Temple again, when he will see his home in Nazareth, when things will return to 'normal', when all this will be over, he does not and cannot know. So, in a strange land,

in another community, for an indeterminate period the Holy Family must pray and wait and survive – relying on the kindness of strangers.

We have no idea when things will return to normal. Whatever normal looks like afterwards it will not be the same. In the interim we live in a strange land, dependent on God and the kindness of strangers. Our prayers and our solidarity and our faithfulness are now, as ever, paramount and, with the example of St. Joseph and the help and guardianship of the angels, we must discern the times and cherish Our Lady and defend the Christ Child.

St. Joseph, pray for us.