

Thought for the week

4th Sunday of Lent — 11th March 2018

I write this as the last remnants of snow in the parish area melt away.

The severe weather added tough externally imposed challenges to those we have imposed on ourselves for Lent. Work, family occasions and various Lenten events went by the wayside as the ‘Beast from the East’ and Storm Emma were unleashed on us.

People were stuck for hours in undrivable roads, while others were stranded overnight on trains after powercuts. Then when the big thaw began, many homes flooded as iced up water tanks overflowed.

Yet some good came out of all this chaos: strangers went up and down queues of snow-stuck cars offering food, hot drinks and blankets to those inside. Neighbours helped dig out each others’ snowbound cars, cleared paths or went to get shopping for those who couldn’t get to the shops. And a couple were able to get married thanks to a stranger with a four-wheel drive getting the snowbound groom to the church on time! While it shouldn’t require extreme weather of this sort for acts of kindness and help, what rich opportunities for those Lenten intentions!

Many who couldn’t get into work or school for a day or two had extra precious family time. Other pluses were: fewer cars on the road, meaning less noise and fumes, more people walking, greeting each other. We went for a walk round Caversham on the Thursday evening, just before the storm, enjoying the additional light reflected by the snow, and the damping down of sounds by this thick white carpet. The usual traffic noise, was replaced by the lovely soft sound of children and parents calling and laughing as they built snowmen or threw snowballs. I noticed the loss of barriers and boundaries between road and pavement; pavement and gardens. It led to me thinking how good it would be if the same thing could happen overnight to the barriers that separate different faiths, or indeed ethnic groups, communities and broken families.

I won’t miss the worst of the weather, but I’ll miss extra the camaraderie, neighbourliness as we pulled together against it. We can, I’m sure keep it going without the storm, if we ask for the Lord’s guidance and strength to carry on with our Lenten pledges, as we look forward to the joy of Easter.

Jim