

Something cheerful day 1

Covid-19 is a world-wide challenge. But one of the inevitable headlines in the British press is that this is the biggest crisis since WWII and we need to find our 'blitz spirit' and start pulling together, helping our neighbours, not selfishly panic buying and spreading alarm. I know a bit about blitz spirit as I grew up in the London of the 50s when the memory of bombing was still fresh in the minds of my parents and the bomb sites served as adventure playgrounds for us kids. Their good memories (the bad were rarely spoken of) were of the camaraderie; singing in the pubs, watching pathe newsreels at the cinema, dances and concerts to raise morale. The London underground was a place of shelter (my grandparents and youngest uncles sheltered at Liverpool Street) then; now it's mind that chap with the rucksack and don't forget to use hand sanitiser every time you change trains.

This latest news and advice of quarantining anybody who may have been in contact with virus and the elderly on principle means that those collective gatherings for fun, reassurance and escapism can't happen. Football matches, sports and concerts are cancelled, we are advised to keep in touch by technology or even old-fashioned post.

So I thought I would post a few video clips of things that might cheer us up for a few minutes.

In 1939, looking to raise morale in London and noticing that the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square was empty, all the pictures having been sent to storage outside London the pianist Dame Myra Hess instituted a daily free lunchtime concert. These were very popular. There was no booking in advance; the idea was that anybody in the area could turn up when free, leave when they needed to and even eat their sandwiches as she (and other musicians) played. During the first concert Jesus Joy of man's desiring was one of the

pieces she played.