

Second Sunday of Easter , 19th April 2020



The Lighting of a Candle

We light this candle to remind us that the love of God is like a light in our darkness.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever.

Amen.

Let us worship God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord be with you
and also with you.

This is the day that the Lord has made.

We will rejoice and be glad in it.

**Lord, direct our thoughts, and teach us to pray.
Lift up our hearts to worship you in spirit and in truth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

God our Father,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins.
For turning away from you,
and ignoring your will for our lives;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

For behaving just as we wish,
without thinking of you;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

For failing you by what we do
and think and say;
Father forgive us:
save us and help us.

For letting ourselves be drawn away from you
by temptations in the world about us;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

For living as if we were ashamed to belong to your Son;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

May the God of Love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Blessed is the Lord
for he has heard the voice of our prayer;
therefore shall our hearts dance for joy
and in our song we will praise our God.

The Collect for the day

Almighty Father,
you have given your only Son to die for our sins
and to rise again for our justification:
grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness
that we may always serve you
in pureness of living and truth;
through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Hearing and responding to the Word of God

Acts 2.14a,22-32

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.

"You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know - is man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law.

But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him,

'I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover my flesh will live in hope.
For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One experience corruption.
You have made known to me the ways of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

"Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,

'He was not abandoned to Hades,
nor did his flesh experience corruption.'

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

Psalm 16

(Song of Trust and Security in God)

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."^[a]

As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble,
in whom is all my delight.

Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;^[b]
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names upon my lips.

The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;

you hold my lot.

The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;

I have a goodly heritage.

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;

in the night also my heart instructs me.

I keep the Lord always before me;

because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;

my body also rests secure.

For you do not give me up to Sheol,

or let your faithful one see the Pit.

You show me the path of life.

In your presence there is fullness of joy;

in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

1 Peter 1.3-9

(A Living Hope)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

John 20.19-31

(Jesus Appears to the Disciples)

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood

among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Reflection

After a strange holy week and Easter being locked down in our houses, there is a sense that we too are closer in some respects to the disciples on that first day of the week than during a normal post Easter Sunday. Fearful too of what the future may bring.

Our Gospel reading starts off back in the locked room with the disciples, on the evening of the first day of the week, It is only three days since Jesus' crucifixion... They have only just heard the news from Mary, and as we can all imagine, don't believe it. They are terrified, what will happen next? What will their future look like? Can they just return to the past? Are the authorities going to hunt them down too? Hence the locked doors...

Suddenly Jesus is there among them... I suppose if a tomb can't hold him then locked doors are definitely not an issue, but can you imagine the reactions from the disciples? No wonder Jesus greets them with 'Peace be with you'! He still has to show them his hands and feet, give them the physical evidence that their minds need so that they can process that this really is Jesus.

This is epitomised by Thomas' reaction... it seems that there is always one who gets left out and in Thomas' case it was him... No way would he be fooled by all this mumbo jumbo, dead bodies don't rise from the dead. He will not believe until he too has seen the evidence.

A week later he too has his turn and not only that Jesus tells him to place his hand into his side, see the holes in his hands and feet- gruesome to you and me. But these are the physical facts that were needed.

Thomas now believes too.

John's Gospel has Jesus passing on the Holy Spirit to his disciples at this point rather than later at Pentecost. I suppose the sense being that they needed the something extra to get them moving...

The disciples are now sent out to proclaim all that they have been taught and have witnessed about Jesus.

We then have our Act's reading showing how the small group of disciples have gone out to spread the news, now steadily growing as more and more people come to believe their message.

We could believe that many of those who joined may have known Jesus, listened to him as members of the crowds (part of the fringe of bystanders) or just have come to know him through the disciples witness and teaching. Whatever the case, they all were so deeply convinced and their lives changed to such an extent, that they willingly shared all they had with the growing group... Powerful stuff that!!

It is from the witness of these first disciples that we have our Christian story today...

This is where the challenge lies: is it just that, a story or is this truly a potentially life changing event? One which we, like the disciples, need to allow the Holy Spirit, to convict us of its authenticity; and then allow ourselves to be sent out, to be a witness to others of this the Jesus story? Just remember the disciples were not allowed to stay hiding in their locked room...

We may be in lock down for now but sometime soon will be allowed out again. But with our modern technology we may be physically isolated but still we can communicate with others. So who do you need to talk to this week?

I encourage you to read through today's readings again slowly. Let the Holy Spirit lead you and listen carefully to what he wants you to do next...

Prayers of Intercession

Holy God, in whom we live and move and have our being,
we make our prayer to you, saying,
Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Grant to all who seek you
the assurance of your presence, your power and your peace.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Grant your healing grace to all who are sick
that they may be made whole in body, mind and spirit.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Grant to all who minister to the suffering
wisdom and skill, sympathy and patience.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Sustain and support the anxious and fearful
and lift up all who are brought low.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Hear us, Lord of life.

Heal us, and make us whole.

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.

Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;

that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

God who made everyone and who may be found in every place, bless our parishes and
Benefice, prosper our attempts to be faithful to you and to draw others to you.

Inspire us by the power of your Holy Spirit that we may be a caring people, the true
community of the body of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord:
thanks be to God.

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the
Holy Spirit, be with us all now and evermore. Amen.**