



NEWSLETTER ❖ SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION EASTER 7

Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Dear friends

Unobserved by many Christians, let alone anxious society in lockdown, Thursday was Ascension Day. It is one of the Feasts of the Lord and of similar importance to Christmas and Easter; St Augustine of Hippo believed that the celebration of the Ascension of the Lord originated with the Apostles and it seems to have been established by the 4th century, yet it's been subject to various chops and changes in recent times.

From 2007 onwards, the Roman Catholics of England and Wales experimented with moving Ascension celebrations to the following Sunday, believing that more people would be in church on the Sunday than on the Thursday for such an important day. Reversed in 2017, it was recognised that moving Ascension Day removed numerous celebrations of Mass within Catholics schools, depriving considerable numbers of young people of a rare experience of Christian worship.

Many Anglicans followed suite with these experiments, moving important weekday feasts - among them Epiphany, Candlemas, Corpus Christi as well as Ascension - to the nearest Sunday. It has always puzzled me that this desire to 'reach more people' was used to justify removing ancient traditions of worship when, however sparse the congregation on a weekday, the combined congregations on Thursday and Sunday are inevitably larger than the Sunday alone. Over the years I have teased many incumbents that they will be introducing 'Ash Sunday' before they know it, while suspecting that the option of removing from the diary several feast days each year has proved irresistible to discouraged clergy with dwindling numbers of volunteers. That scenario is neither satisfactory nor necessary - especially where worship is concerned. This year, of course, the argument is largely academic since we are still being instructed by our civic leadership to keep church buildings closed, a loathsome - if necessary - situation.

As well as this dubiously conceived change, amnesia about the Ascension has also been unwittingly encouraged by the new understanding of Easter stemming from the Second Vatican Council, extending the Paschal season from forty to fifty days. Ascensiontide used to be a little season itself, but now it is absorbed within Eastertide which continues right to Pentecost. Some of us remember the Paschal Candle being removed from the chancel back to the baptistery on Ascension Day; now it stays put until after Evening Prayer on Pentecost. While there may be a clarity in the extended pattern of Easter, it erodes the significance of Ascension to treat it this way for a further reason.

Like the Ascension, Pentecost - Whitsun as the Prayer Book calls it - used to have its own tide or season too: an octave of days during which prayer for the outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church was the major theme. In the new calendar, Pentecost too is deprived of its octave and the next day we revert to Ordinary Time. What has happened to that special time of prayer for the Holy Spirit's gifts? It now resides between Ascension Day and Pentecost, a novena rather than an octave, but again shifting the focus away from the Ascension.

You may find all this rather esoteric and rarefied, and you could be right. Yet, even in a time of crisis when issues arising from human frailty are causing so much concern, there is considerable merit in pondering the Ascension a little more than the Church's modern calendar encourages. For the Ascension of the Lord proclaims loudly not only how much God loves humanity - shown by the living God taking human flesh - but also that humanity in Christ has been taken into heaven, pioneering a journey to which we are all called. In the mystery of God's love, redeemed human nature has a glorious destiny.

So, please, observe this great season of Eastertide, pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be outpoured in our lives, but also remember that the Ascension of the Lord is a hugely important aspect of our faith. If we ask, the Holy Spirit will enlighten us about that too if we remain open to his leading.

Fr Alasdair

THE WEEK AHEAD

The Rector will again be in leave on Monday: Morning and Evening Prayer will be placed on the website by kind members of the congregation but there will be no Mass on Monday.

Another Zoom meeting (bring your own coffee or tea) is planned at **1000 on Wednesday**.

To Join Zoom Meeting at 1000 on Wednesday:

Alasdair Coles is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82546386442?pwd=Nklvc005SGINVldDSlJTZEFlkUT09>

Meeting ID: 825 4638 6442

Password: 4mkGii

To join Zoom Compline at **2100 on Wednesdays**:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/95212642115?pwd=TnRUMnVMYXVFSzN4O2Z0bmRULlR2QT09>

Meeting ID: 952 1264 2115

Password: 6xwygF

A reminder that, wherever possible, audio recordings of services are being shared on the church website here:

<https://www.allsaints-standrews.org.uk/category/virtualseervices/>

Next Sunday is Pentecost (Whitsun). Bishop Ian regrets very much that he will not be able to be with us to celebrate and administer the sacrament of Confirmation and we look forward to rescheduling that once it is practical to do so. Gladly, he has offered to send us a recording of a sermon.

Thank you to those providing audio files for various parts of today's Sung Mass and to those who helped with the Sung Mass for Ascension Day.

SERMON FOR THE 7TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

'Location, location, location': the cliché describes not the monotony of lockdown constraints and the yearning to be free of them, not merely a Channel 4 property show, but also the superlative importance in the property market of where bricks and mortar are set down. First appearing in print in the ads of the *Chicago Tribune* in 1926, it's a much older tag than I realised. With an eye on rock and sand, you could even argue it expresses a gospel theme through the wisdom or folly revealed by our choice of where to build and what to use as foundations.

This Sunday after Ascension traditionally recycles the themes of Ascension Day itself, the story of which reappears in the First Reading today from Acts. In this remarkable passage, St Luke describes how the disciples, gathered at our first location on the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem, questioned Jesus about when the restoration of Israel would occur. His response was to assert that it was not their concern and to direct them instead to await the coming of the Holy Spirit and their receiving of power. With our 2020 hindsight we know that this was probably not the kind of power envisaged by their question, power to drive out foreigners and vindicate the hopes of one race, the power that builds barriers. What the Holy Spirit gave was power to cross barriers and build bridges - enabling the disciples to speak in the language of every race and to bear witness to the ends of the earth to Jesus: *You will be my witnesses* are his final words before he is taken from their sight.

The leader of that first group of witnesses provides a link to a second location, in our Epistle reading, a glimpse of what being a witness to Jesus meant many years later. St Peter uses dramatic language to describe the experiences of a group of churches in Asia Minor - modern Turkey - subject to social discrimination. It includes the famous text from the beginning of *Compline*, *be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour, whom resist steadfast in the faith*. The Letter reminds its hearers of the importance of a faith calm and disciplined, even under intense pressure - a metaphorically *fiery ordeal* of unjust punishment and social hostility because of their Christian faith. *Humble yourselves*, he writes, *under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time*.

From Asia Minor, the Gospel reading returns us to Jerusalem, to our third location - that of the Last Supper, after which this passage is set. Known as the Great High Priestly Prayer of Jesus, this has been called 'the real Lord's Prayer' and comprises not the familiar text of Jesus teaching his disciples how to pray, but his own prayer to the Father. It distills for us his desire for the disciples - and those who believe in him through their teaching - to be one with the Father, one with him, in love and in glory. Perhaps the most fundamental prayer in the Bible, these beautiful words express the desire

of God to share his love, both of which - the desire to share and the love itself - have existed from before the foundation of the world, for they are facets of the nature of God.

Immediately after this prayer, the scenery of St John's Gospel shifts to Gethsemane and the beginning of the Passion. It's as though the strength of the prayer carried the Lord through that terrible ordeal, through the joy of Easter, to the Ascension: *And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.* Like the last piece in the jigsaw, the Ascension of the Lord and his physical absence from one location - the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem - allows his spiritual presence to be given in every location, to be experienced by all who open themselves to the Holy Spirit in prayer, at every altar where the Holy Spirit graces the Church with his real and sacramental presence to be worshipped and adored. But it also has an critical even effect upon worship of heaven.

Until that mysterious moment when the risen Lord ascended to the throne of God, the worship of heaven had not included the hymn specific to Christians, the *Agnus Dei*. With the Lamb of God ascended to the throne of heaven, we find the Revelation of St John perceiving a new song ringing forth from the heavenly host: *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing.* A new worship had begun, the worship of Jesus Christ.

So, the locations of our readings today - the Mount of Olives, the scattered Christians of Asia Minor, the Last Supper - each offers to nourish our faith. The Ascension affirms the worship due to Christ glorified renewing the worship of heaven and then turns our attention from cloud-gazing to search for the in-breaking of heaven in our own context under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. St Peter's guidance to Christians in Asia Minor and scattered across the world - ancient and modern - was to be patient, to meet harsh or unjust responses to the worship of the Lord with humility not reprisal, believing that Christ promises to be with us in his suffering and will reveal his glory there. And the upper room reminds us that our Great High Priest, the Lamb of God, draws us into his self-offering every time we adore him in his sacramental presence, however distantly and spiritually that must be at this time. The glory is still there, and through our worship draws us deeper and deeper into the unity and the love that it represents - into the life of heaven.

In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Rector

LECTIONS FOR SERVICES THIS WEEK

<i>Easter 7</i> 24 May	Mass Acts 1.6-14 Psalm 68.1-10, 33-35 I Peter 4.12-14; 5.6-11 John 17.1-11	MP Psalms 24, 110 Isaiah 65.17-end Revelation 21.1-8	EP Psalms 47, 108 2 Samuel 23.1-5 Ephesians 1.15-end
<i>Mon 25</i>	<i>The Venerable Bede</i> Acts 19.1-8 Psalm 68.1-6 John 16.29-end	Psalms 119.33-72 Numbers 27.1-35 I Corinthians 3	Psalms 119.73-104 Deuteronomy 31.1-13 I John 2.18-end
<i>Tues 26</i>	<i>St Augustine of Canterbury</i> Acts 20.17-27 Psalm 68.9-10, 18-19 John 17.1-11	Psalms 119.105-144 I Samuel 10.1-10 I Corinthians 12.1-13	Psalms 119.145-176 Deuteronomy 31.14-29 I John 3.1-10
<i>Weds 27</i>	Acts 20.28-end Psalm 68.27-28, 32-end John 17.11-19	Psalms 120-125 I Kings 19.1-18 Matthew 3.13-end	Psalms 126-131 Deuteronomy 31.30-32.14 I John 3.11-end
<i>Thurs 28</i>	Acts 22.30, 23.6-11 Psalm 16.1, 5-end John 17.20-end	Psalms 132-135 Ezekiel 11.14-20 Matthew 9.35-10.20	Psalms 136-138 Deuteronomy 32.15-47 I John 4.1-6
<i>Fri 29</i>	Acts 25.13-21 Psalm 103.1-2, 11-12, 19-20 John 21.15-19	Psalms 139-140 Ezekiel 36.22-28 Matthew 12.22-32	Psalms 141-143 Deuteronomy 33 I John 4.7-end
<i>Sat 30</i>	Acts 28.16-20, 30-end Psalm 11.4-end John 21.20-end	Psalms 144-146 Micah 3.1-8 Ephesians 6.10-20	Psalms 145 Deuteronomy 16.9-15 John 15.26-16.5

If you don't have your own Prayer Book, the Offices of Morning & Evening Prayer are in the same section as recorded services on the church website. If you'd like to borrow a Prayer Book or any other resources from church, let the Rector know.

GIVING TO ALL SAINTS'

A reminder for any who would like to support All Saints' financially our bank details are:

Bank: Royal Bank of Scotland
 Branch: 113 – 115 South Street, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9QB
 Sort Code: 83-26-28
 Account name: All Saints Episcopal Church – St Andrews
 Account number: 00104363

Treasurer's contact details: Mr Ian Palfrey, 8a Howard Place, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9HL
 01334 472358 treasurer@allsaints-standrews.org.uk

INTERCESSIONS

7 of Easter

The Rector is officiating at the funeral of Frances Wann on Wednesday this week - Frances lived her whole life in the Guardbridge/Balmullo area and died at the age of 92. He is also conducting the funeral for Jacqui Hunter-Quate and her baby daughter Olivia on Friday morning at 11am; please continue to hold in your prayers the families of those bereaved at this time, especially Lori-Mark Quate and the Hunters, both local families, and all who are supporting them in their grief.

IN PARTICULAR NEED

Debbie & Priscilla White, Eleanor Ross, David McLean, Anne Zweers, *Priest*, Steve Scott, Amy Cox, Robyn Seenan, Bill Scott, *Priest*, Samantha, Averil Taylor, *Priest*, Anne Clayton, Ashley Cummins, *Priest*, Ian Sadler, Angela Allaway, Andrew Mate, Cherry Jackson, Lori-Mark Quate, Graham Kennedy, Robin White

CONTINUING NEED

Lenora Mahoney, Effie Keracher, Jonah & Chris Andrews, Gareth, Jenni & Rosalie Saunders, Kathleen Cummins, Charles & Thomas Ware, Ann Noltie, Lawrence Reynolds, Sally-Marie Gardner, Edie, Amber & Morya Blyth, Alice Bullough, Joan Day, Becca Swanson & baby Nairn, Janet Reid, Catherine Rowe, Bill Hyland

RESIDENTIAL CARE

Catriona, Fiona Ingham, John Shillaker, *Priest*, Marie-Louise Moffatt, *Priest*, Charlie Mather

RECENTLY DEPARTED

Michael Shrewsbury, *priest*, Scott Blyth, Wendy Stevens, Frances Wann, Jacqui Quate & baby, Joan Maines, Simon Barrington-Ward, *Bishop*

YEAR'S MIND

24/5 Frederick Sharman, 1930
25 David Everard Poole, 2001, Evelyn Agnes Henley, 2003
26 Mabel Dodd, 1996, Mary Jane Thackeray, 1997
27 Emily Janet Wynne, 1931, Agnes Goodall Spence, 1936, Stanley Roland Wilson, 2011
29 Margaret Barry, 1941, Lawrence Leonard Gourlay, 1979
30 Agnes Arnold, 1922, Catherine Lumsden, 1934, William Bell, 1942

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