

St. Arvans Group – Weekly Newsletter and Readings

Sunday 17th May 2020 - The Sixth Sunday of Easter

Welcome to the Newsletter for our group of parishes during the period when, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, our churches are closed.

Sunday readings are included so that we may join spiritually in the Church's offering of the Eucharist, which will now take place in private.

Please help to keep us informed of anyone who is in need or is isolated over the next weeks and months, and anyone in need of our prayer and support

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17th May 2020

The Sixth Sunday of Easter

The Collect

God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unitof the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **AMEN**

A reading from the Acts

of the Apostles [17; 22 - 31]

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we too are his offspring." Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he

commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.'

Reader/ This is the Word of the Lord **Response / Thanks be to God**

Psalms 66 7 - 18

**R/Let the sound of his praise
be heard.**

Bless our God, you peoples;
make the voice of his praise to be heard.
Who holds our souls in life,
and will not allow our feet to slip.

R/Let the sound of his praise be heard.

For you, O God, have proved us;
you have tried us just as silver is tried.
You brought us into the snare;
you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.
You let enemies ride over our heads;

we went through fire and water;
but you brought us out into a place of refreshment.

**R/Let the sound of his praise
be heard.**

I will enter your house with burnt-offerings
and will pay you my vows,
which I promised with my lips
and spoke with my mouth
when I was in trouble.

I will offer you sacrifices of fat beasts
with the smoke of rams;
I will give you oxen and goats.

**R/Let the sound of his praise
be heard.**

Come and listen,
all you who fear God,
and I will tell you
what he has done for me.

I called out to him with my mouth,
and his praise was on my tongue.
If I had found evil in my heart,
the Lord would not have heard me;

**R/Let the sound of his praise
be heard.**

But in truth God has heard me;
he has attended to the voice
of my prayer.

Blessèd be God,
who has not rejected my prayer,
nor withheld his love from me.

**R/Let the sound of his praise
be heard.**

A reading from the first letter of St Peter [3; 13 - 22]

Who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you – not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Reader/ This is the Word of the Lord Response / **Thanks be to God**

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus said: 'if anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him.' **Alleluia!**

The Lord be with you:

R/ And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to St. John.

R/ Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples:

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.' [14, 15 - 21]

This is the Gospel of the Lord

R/ Praise to you, O Christ.

Thought for the Week

""A beginner must look on himself as one setting out to make a garden for his Lord's pleasure, on most unfruitful soil which abounds in weeds. God, in his majesty, roots up the weeds and will put in good plants instead. Let us reckon that this is already done when the soul decides to practice prayer and has begun to do so."

- *Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-82)*-

For Your Prayers

For growing crops and animals;

the life of the countryside and all who live and work in it.

That our spiritual communions this Eastertide will give us the grace to serve Christ more fully.

Those throughout the world suffering from the Coronavirus

Doctors, nurses and all medical staff, all carers, medical scientists and researchers.

All who are isolated and alone, those anxious for their health and well-being and those of their loved ones.

For those in government throughout the world, that they may make informed, wise and compassionate decisions for the good of all

For the Church:

For the bishops of the Church: John, Archbishop of Wales, Cherry, Bishop of Monmouth, Philip, Episcopal Visitor of the Society of the Holy Cross in Wales, Jonathan, Bishop of Ebbsfleet; Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury. & for all who hold and teach the Catholic faith that comes to us from the Apostles.

All bishops, priests and deacons and all baptised Christians

For the reunion of all Christians: for Pope Francis, for Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, & for the leaders of the Reformed traditions

For the Sick & those in need:

Roy Staples, Ralph Hamilton, Patricia Hamilton; Sylvia; The Revd Helen Rodwell; Amanda Morgan; Naomi; Kim; Elisabeth; Kerrie; Trevor; Helen; Cliff Edwards; Kate Lewis;

Dave; John Gillard

For the Departed:

The recently departed: Phillip Neal; our own departed relatives & friends, those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Anne Flora Clay Iris Raven; Barbara Zerny; David Thomas, bishop.

A Prayer of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that you are
in the Blessed Sacrament.
I love you above all things,
and I long for you in my soul.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least
spiritually into my heart.
As though you have already come,
I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me
to be separated from you. Amen.
(*The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament*)

This Week

In the today's Gospel for the Sixth Sunday of Easter, we hear the consoling words from Jesus in St John's Gospel: "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" as he promised to send the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth to us. Today is also Rogation Sunday, when special prayers are said for crops, livestock and for the natural world.

During the weekday readings, we learn of the work of the early disciples, emboldened by all they have seen, who preach and baptize and spread the good news. Paul has a vision of the Lord saying "Do not be afraid. Go on speaking and do not be silenced for I am with you."

In the Gospels we are with Jesus, bidding us his farewell, in St John's Gospel. The reason we can be assured, after he leaves us, is that he and the Father are one. So, we can ask for anything, and the Father will give it to us.

The Psalm responses all week are notably joyful in this Easter season:

The Lord takes delight in his people.

Your right hand saves me.

Heaven & earth are full of your glory.

Next Sunday's readings: Next Sunday is celebrated as the great ***Feast of the Ascension***. Jesus' return to the Father after commissioning his apostles to proclaim his resurrection to all nations

A Meditation for the Sixth Sunday of Easter

+ By tradition, this Sixth Sunday of Easter, the fifth Sunday after Easter as it used to be numbered, has been called Rogation Sunday. That word 'Rogation' comes from the Latin 'to ask' and the liturgy for this particular Sunday used to focus on the theme of asking for our needs in prayer in the light of the Lord's Resurrection and the awaited gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Old Gospels, both in the medieval liturgies and in the Prayer Book contained the words of Jesus, "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give to you". What we really ask for, of course, is the grace of the Holy Spirit to enable us to be true disciples of Jesus, but over the centuries this Sunday became an important occasion in the rural calendar. Because of the timing of this Sunday, coming in most years when Spring was in full bloom and the newly planted crops were very much in evidence in the fields, the Church's prayer of asking - of rogation - came naturally to be focused on the needs of the agricultural community and the needs of the society organised around it.

So, processions came to be held to bless the crops and new-born animals in the fields, looking forward to a good and successful year at a time when the success of the harvest and the health of livestock meant the difference between life and death, or at the very least, prosperity and near starvation in an entirely rural economy.

Interestingly, these processions also took on the role of “beating the bounds,” an important activity for the whole parish at a time when the documentation of parish boundaries, field divisions and land ownership weren’t always as clear as they are today. These things were vital for the rich and the poor alike; for the element of justice and good order contained within them. The priest and poet George Herbert wrote of the customs of Rogation Sunday in the first part of the seventeenth century:

“The Country Parson is a Lover of old Customes... Particularly, he loves Procession, and maintains it, because there are contained therein four manifest advantages. First, a blessing of God for the fruits of the field: Secondly, justice in the Preservation of bounds : Thirdly, Charity in loving walking, and neighbourly accompanying one another, with reconciling of differences at that time, if there be any : Fourthly, Mercy in relieving the poor by a liberall distribution and largesse, which at that time is, or ought to be used’

I like the end of that - is - or ought to be - used!

Times change, societies evolve, and rulers and crises come and go, but here in the countryside the emphasis of Rogation Sunday remains the same in asking a blessing on growing crops in fields and gardens, on young lambs and calves in the fields. We can’t do it physically this year - at least not together - but we can pray for it.

Rogation is above all a springtime event, when the earth is seen to be renewed after the dormancy of the winter months. It takes place during this period of Eastertide, the season of Resurrection and new life. Perhaps we should say that the real underlying theme of today’s liturgies of blessing is the renewal brought to the whole human race as a result of the new life of the Lord’s resurrection.

It’s been said that, in the life of the Church, time doesn’t pass capriciously, in a linear way, but cyclically; the marking of time for the Christian is filled with memory and celebration. We don’t just experience, or sometimes endure, the passing of time, we celebrate it as one of the ways we are made holy by being reminded, day by day, year by year of the unfathomable mercy of God in the events of our salvation.

Our faith is a faith of rootedness, a faith of Incarnation. God becomes man in order to lead us back to God. He takes the ordinary, everyday things of life and uses them to communicate his presence and his grace.

Prayer is an activity of a human race redeemed by the death and resurrection of Christ, and as we offer at the altar the death and resurrection of his Son at the Eucharist, God embraces the world in prayer, and our whole lives are caught up in the relationship of the Father and the Son in the bond of the Holy Spirit. And nowhere is that more clearly pointed out to us than in today’s Gospel where Jesus speaks of his going from the world to the Father; he goes, not to leave us as orphans but so he can be with us in a fuller way through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Celebrations such as these today root that belief in renewal and redemption both in the landscape of our own lives and in the physical landscape which surrounds us. We are reminded of our place in God’s scheme of things.

This is the landscape in which we are called to unite ourselves to the purposes of God, to struggle against the things in our own selves and in our World, which are alienated from him. And so, the place where we are, the place where God has put us for a definite purpose, becomes the land of grace, the place of our abiding in the spiritual fellowship of the Holy Trinity, a place of prayer and praise to the living God.

This is where we are placed and where we are called to honour God and serve one another, this - wherever it may be, and wherever we find ourselves - is the land of prayer and praise, the land made holy by Word and Sacrament, the land of grace, the place of our own salvation. Today as we offer the Eucharist we celebrate the whole creation gathered to God in the liturgy of redemption. +