



ST STEPHEN'S
GLOUCESTER ROAD



TOGETHER IN PRAYER
DURING OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2020

TOGETHER IN PRAYER

Welcome to this publication from St Stephen's, Gloucester Road which offers news, reflections and resources for worship at home or in church as we continue to navigate together the challenges of covid-19.

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Cover image: detail of the gradine of the High Altar at St Stephen's, Gloucester Road

“VERY MEMBERS INCORPORATE...”

Whatever way you cut it, the challenge that the pandemic continues to create across the globe boils down to cost and risk. As governments work to find sustainable ways forward for their economies they balance the risks to public health and to the welfare of society.

But there are two things that have been clearly revealed for us over these extraordinary past few months: Firstly the lack of choice that many have about how they can personally balance cost and risk. For those who have to work or live in crowded contexts that make them vulnerable the choices are limited ones. Secondly, we’ve been shown how we depend on the people who often receive little reward for what they do – it’s the refuse collectors, the shelf-stackers, the care workers and so on who have carried so much for us. These are reminders that we need to hold on to as we chart the course for the rebuilding of society.

There is, though, another lesson that the pandemic has taught us. Each time we turn on the news we’re reminded of the shared vulnerability that we are living through; and when there’s a shared vulnerability our solidarity with each other becomes clearer. It’s often said that at times of war and conflict societies pull together – we still talk about ‘the spirit of the blitz’ here in London - meaning that when we’re ‘up against it’ together we find a new common identity in adversity.

It’s important not to over exaggerate things, but we’re all conscious of being at risk, and that we have to share the privations and restrictions that the pandemic imposes on all of us for the common good. In the early stages of the covid restrictions there was a good deal of furry over the actions of Dominic Cummings because it appeared as if he wasn’t following the same guidelines as the rest of the population, and, for the most part, there’s a common understanding that we can’t just carry on as we want at the expense of others.

The vocabulary of corporate responsibility and of solidarity with one another sits easily within the vocabulary of Christian faith, and it’s something that the Church reflects upon particularly in October and November – months associated with all the angels and saints. We’re

thinking in these months about what it means to be in ‘one communion and fellowship’ within the household of God. There is a basic recognition of shared worth and value that flows from our profession of faith in the dignity and destiny of humankind, and the New Testament is full of the sense of our belonging to one another in the body of Christ where, when one suffers all suffer together (Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:26).

I’m put in mind of a phrase from the order for the Eucharist in the Book of Common Prayer. Towards the end of that service the priest prays on behalf of the congregation a Prayer of Thanksgiving for the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ; and it includes a beautiful phrase saying that sharing in Holy Communion assures us “that we are *very members incorporate* in the mystical body of thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people.”

It’s the use of that word ‘incorporate’ which is so striking. At its root is the Latin word *corpus*, which means body. This prayer reminds us that we are *in-corp-orate* – members of the *body* of Christ. On one level we are incorporated into the very body of Christ in our baptisms. Again, this is something that St Paul speaks of in his letters: he tells us that we are joined to Jesus in baptism so that we can share his eternal life (Cf. Galatians 3:27).

But we also use the image of the body to talk about the Church, “you are the body of Christ” says St Paul writing to the Corinthians, “and individually members of it” (Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:27). That’s the image picked up

ALMIGHTY and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee, for that thou dost vouchsafe to feed us, who have duly received these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; and dost assure us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us; and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people; and are also heirs through hope of thy everlasting kingdom, by the merits of the most precious death and passion of thy dear Son. And we most humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

on by the prayer from the Book of Common Prayer as it call's the Church "the mystical body of thy son, the blessed company of all faithful people." It envisages a sacred society, a mutually interdependent company that spans the whole spectrum of the Church on earth and those in the communion of saints who have gone before us.

At its best, one of the things that celebrating our belief in the communion of saints does is to stretch our visions and imaginations as we think about what the Church is. We realise that the Church does not merely consist of the gathering of the congregation of St Stephen's Gloucester Road; nor is it limited to the parishes that make the See of Fulham or the Diocese of London; the Church, thank God, is not limited to the Church of England, or the World Wide Anglican Communion, or even the visible Church on earth. The Church of God is that countless number of baptised now, and all those gone before us in the life of faith. It is a vast company, the mystical body of Christ: The angels, the archangels, and all the company of heaven, awaiting that fulfilment of the Kingdom of God.

We've had a surprising reminder of the breadth of our belonging in the way that we have worshipped during the pandemic. The technology of livestreaming has had its frustrations and limitations, but isn't it interesting that we've been joined for Sunday Mass with people in Switzerland and St Petersburg, in the United States and France, in Margate and Harrogate – as well as familiar friends nearer home!

Maybe one of the things we can re-encounter at this time is that vision of communion with others, of standing with others, of responsibility for others. Recently Pope Francis has said that we can only emerge from the challenges of the pandemic together, and our understanding of what it means to be "very members incorporate" offers a hopeful sign for the future.

As we look to the future, I'm praying that the principles of life in the body may guide our efforts to emerge from the crisis by working for a social order ever more just and respectful of the dignity and gifts of each of its members.

with my love and prayers,
Fr Philip

NEWS

TIMES OF MASSES

Sunday

Mass 9am

Sung Mass 11am *this Mass is live streamed on our YouTube channel*

Monday

There is no Mass on Monday – Fr Philip's day off

Tuesday

Mass 12.30pm

Wednesday

Mass 7pm

Thursday

Mass 12.30pm

Friday

Holy Hour 5pm – 6pm

This is a lovely chance to spend some quiet time before the Lord at the end of a busy week

Mass 6pm

Saturday

Mass 10am

The church will be open from 9am until 2pm

While the installation of our new lighting is being carried out the church is only open for services. This work is scheduled to be completed towards the end of November.

GATHERING FOR MASS

In order that we may gather safely the following measures are in place:

- Please use the sanitising gel to cleanse your hands as you enter church, and as you leave.
- Government guidelines mean that face coverings are now compulsory inside the church, unless you have an exemption.
- A venue check-in code is displayed at the back of church and in the porch for those using the NHS Test and Trace app.
- Those visiting the church may leave contact details as part of the Track and Trace scheme. These details are destroyed after three weeks, and are used for the purpose of Track and Trace only.
- Observe social distancing, and find a seat at least two metres from your neighbour. Remember to keep the social distance when you arrive and leave, conscious of the anxieties others may have.
- The service booklet will guide you through necessary adaptations to the liturgy.
- We are doing our best to keep the timing for the Sung Mass 'tight', and the usual prayers of intercession are brief, but we're praying for the sick and needy during the weekday Masses. Please speak to Fr Philip if you'd like someone included.
- There is no collection during the Mass. We encourage those who haven't yet joined the Planned Giving scheme to do so (forms at the back of church), or there is a plate to receive your offering at the door after Mass.
- The 11am Sung Mass continues to be live-streamed on our YouTube channel. Please be aware that the camera angle includes those coming forward to receive Holy Communion.
- We much regret that we are unable to offer the usual hospitality following the 11am Sung Mass. There is an opportunity to greet each other outside as we leave.
- We're grateful for those who continue to offer help by reading at the Sung Mass, and by helping with sanitising the building afterwards. Please continue to sign up on the sheets at the back of church.

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETINGS

This meeting, which receives the annual report and elects Churchwardens and PCC members, had to be postponed from April, and will now take place on Sunday 25 October following the 11am Sung Mass. We hope many parishioners will be able to attend this brief meeting. If you'd like to find out more about joining the PCC in their ministry of leadership in the parish just speak to Fr Philip or one of the Churchwardens.

ELECTORAL ROLL

As part of our preparation for the APCM the Electoral Roll (our record of membership, and the electorate for the APCM) is now open for revision. If you are not already on it please complete a form which are available from the back of church.

MUSIC NEWS

- We are delighted that the scope and scale of the choral music that we are able to offer at the Sung Mass is increasing gradually, and we are hopeful the next couple of months will see the return of our regular quartet of singers once we have established protocols for their safe social distancing.
- It's very good to welcome our new Organ Scholar, Jim Cooper. Jim comes to us following an organ scholarship at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge and he is working as an auditor and is studying towards his Chartered Accountancy exams.
- Although we continue to navigate changing guidance we are looking forward to offering our now customary Service for Advent at 6pm on November 29th. This includes choral music and readings reflecting on the great themes of the season, and this year we hope the Bishop will be with us to bless the new light scheme. Do put the date in your diary!
- We have hosted our first concert since lock-down, with a socially distanced audience and no interval, and it was a super occasion. The next will be on November 8th at 6.00pm and includes works for strings by Holst and Purcell. Details and tickets (which must be purchased in advance) can be found at www.orionorchestra.org.uk

THE ORDER FOR MASS

On Sundays Mass is livestreamed at 11am. This outline order is provided to assist you in joining in at home.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

The Entrance Antiphon is sung as the Priest enters and censes the altar.

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

The Lord be with you. **And with your spirit.**

The Priest introduces the Mass and invites us to confess our sins.

I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Kyrie eleison

Kyrie, eleison.

Lord, have mercy.

Christe, eleison.

Christ, have mercy.

Kyrie, eleison.

Lord, have mercy.

Gloria in Excelsis

Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam, Domine Deus, Rex caelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens. Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe, Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis;

Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us;

qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis.

Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu: in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Collect

Let us pray.

After a pause for silent prayer the Priest says the Collect to which we acclaim:

Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Two readings follow. At the end of each reading:

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Between the readings the Psalm is said, and we make the response after each verse.

Gospel acclamation

The cantor sings the Alleluia.

Gospel

The Lord be with you. **And with your spirit.**

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to N.

Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end the Priest acclaims:

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

A homily is given.

Profession of Faith

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was

incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The gifts of bread and wine are placed upon the altar. The Offertory Antiphon is sung.

Invitation to Prayer

Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

The Priest says the Prayer over the Offerings, at the end of which we acclaim: Amen.

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord be with you. **And with your spirit.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right and just.**

At the end of the Preface of the prayer:

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.

Pleni sunt cæli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis.

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis.

*Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*

The Eucharistic Prayer continues with the words of institution.

This acclamation is used:

The mystery of faith.

We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

As the prayer reaches its conclusion we boldly acclaim:

Amen.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

At the Saviours command, and formed by Divine teaching, we dare to say:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever.

Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will. Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And with your spirit.**

Breaking of the Bread

During the breaking of the host the Agnus Dei is sung.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi: miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi: dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Invitation to Communion

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

The Priest and People receive Holy Communion.

The Communion Antiphon and a Motet is sung.

An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Holy Sacrament of the altar. I love you above all things and I passionately desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come spiritually into my soul so that I may unite myself wholly to you now and forever. Amen.

Prayer after Communion

*The Priest says the appointed prayer, to which we acclaim: **Amen.***

THE CONCLUDING RITES

The Lord be with you. **And with your spirit.**

May almighty God bless you, + the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Go in peace. **Thanks be to God.**

THE ANGELUS

1. The angel of the Lord brought tidings to Mary: and she conceived by the Ho - ly
 2. Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me a - cord - ing to thy
 3. And the word was made flesh: and dwelt a - mong—

7

Spirit. word us. Hail Mary full of grace the Lord is with Thee Blessed art thou among women and

12

blessed is the fruit of thy womb Je - sus; Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners now

19

and at the hour of our death, A - men Pray for us O Holy Mother of God

25 Response accompanied

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. (Collect) A - men.

We beseech Thee, O Lord, pour Thy grace into our hearts; that as we have known the incarnation of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, by the message of an angel, so by His Passion and Cross we may be brought to the glory of His Resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYING IN THE EARLY MORNING

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

Praise at the dawn of the day

In the rising of the light of dawn we praise you, O Lord,
for you are the redeemer of all creation.

Grant us, in your mercy,
a day filled with your peace.

Forgive us our sins.

May our hope not falter.

Hide not your face from us.

You keep us in your caring love;

Do not weary of us.

You alone know our weakness.

O God, do not abandon us. Amen.

From the East Syrian Church

Silence

My petition for the day...

Our Father...

Aaron's Blessing

Lord, bless me and keep me; let your face shine upon me and be gracious to me. Lift up your countenance upon me and give me peace.

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

PRAYING IN THE LATE EVENING

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

Quietly, I look back over this day. I call to mind the things and the people I have encountered in the course of this day and what I have thought, said, and done.

At the end of the day

My God, each evening

I come joyfully to you

to thank you for the graces you have given me.

I ask pardon for the faults I have committed

during this day, which now fades like a dream.

Jesus, how happy I would be if I had always been faithful.

Yet unfortunately I am often sad in the evening,

for I feel I could have responded better to your grace.

But I will not lose courage at the sight of my misery,

but instead I come trustfully to you.

For I think, it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

And so I implore you to heal me and forgive me.

And tomorrow, with the help of your grace,

I will begin a new life,

in which every moment is to be a sign of love and gratitude.

And one day, after I have knelt

evening after evening before your altar,

there will come the final evening of my life.

And then for me the everlasting day will dawn,

that knows no evening anymore.

Then, on your divine heart, I will rest

from all the battles of this heart.

Amen.

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

Lord, grant me a quiet night and a perfect end in you.

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

CALENDAR FOR PRAYER

OCTOBER

- 1 St Thérèse of Lisieux, *Religious & Doctor of the Church* For growth in love
2 The Holy Guardian Angels Thanksgiving for the angels
3 Feria Thanksgiving for Our Lady
- 4 Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time** Our Parish
5 Feria For those working in the health service
6 Feria For Care Workers
7 Our Lady of the Rosary For growth in prayer
8 Feria For departed members of the Guild of All Souls
9 St John Henry Newman, *Priest* For those engaged in ecumenical dialogue
10 St Paulinus of York, *Bishop & Missionary* For the Province of York
- 11 Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time** Our Parish
12 St Wilfrid, *Bishop & Missionary* For the Society of St Wilfrid & St Hilda
13 St Edward the Confessor, *King* For Westminster Abbey
14 Feria For those who are sick
15 St Teresa of Avila, *Religious & Doctor of the church* For Carmelites
16 Feria For those who are unemployed
17 St Ignatius of Antioch, *Bishop & Martyr* For those persecuted for their faith
- 18 Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time** Our Parish
19 Feria For the Government
20 Feria For those caring for sick loved ones
21 Feria For the anxious and depressed
22 Feria For the homeless and for the work of Glass Door
23 Feria For our godchildren
24 Feria Thanksgiving for Our Lady
- 25 Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time** Our Parish
26 Ss Chad & Cedd, *Bishops & Missionaries* For our Bishop, Jonathan
27 Feria Thanksgiving for God's gifts in creation
28 Ss Simon & Jude, *Apostles* For courage in sharing our faith
29 Feria For those engaged in medical research
30 Feria For those working in the performing arts
31 Feria Thanksgiving for Our Lady

NOVEMBER

- 1 **All Saints** *Our Parish*
- 2 All Souls *For all the faithful departed*
- 3 Feria *For the people of the United States of America*
- 4 St Charles Borromeo, *Bishop* *For teachers of the Christian faith*
- 5 Feria *For departed members of the Guild of All Souls*
- 6 Feria *For the Archbishop of Canterbury*
- 7 Feria *Thanksgiving for the Blessed Virgin Mary*
- 8 **Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time** *Our Parish & The Fallen*
- 9 Feria *Thanksgiving for our church building*
- 10 St Leo the Great, *Pope & Doctor of the Church* *For Pope Francis*
- 11 St Martin of Tours, *Bishop* *For the mission of the Church*
- 12 St Josaphat, *Bishop & Martyr* *For the people of Ukraine*
- 13 Feria *For St Stephen's House, Oxford and all seminarians*
- 14 Feria *Thanksgiving for the Blessed Virgin Mary*
- 15 **Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time** *Our Parish*
- 16 St Margaret of Scotland, *Queen* *For mothers*
- 17 St Hilda of Whitby, *Religious* *For the Society of St Wilfrid & St Hilda*
- 18 Feria *For our Parochial Church Council*
- 19 Feria *For Church Musicians*
- 20 St Edmund, *King* *For the growth of our congregation*
- 21 The Presentation of the B.V.M. *Thanksgiving for the Blessed Virgin Mary*
- 22 **Christ the King** *Our Parish*
- 23 Feria *For those who have lapsed from practicing the faith*
- 24 St Andrew Dung-Lac & his companions, *Martyrs* *For the persecuted*
- 25 Feria *For Her Majesty the Queen & the Royal Family*
- 26 Feria *For the people of the United States of America on Thanksgiving Day*
- 27 Feria *For our keeping of Advent*
- 28 Feria *Thanksgiving at the close of the Liturgical Year*

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

4 October 2020

Gospel Reading

Matthew 21. 33-43

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, ‘Listen to another parable. There was a man, a landowner, who planted a vineyard; he fenced it round, dug a winepress in it and built a tower; then he leased it to tenants and went abroad. When vintage time drew near he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his servants, thrashed one, killed another and stoned a third. Next he sent some more servants, this time a larger number, and they dealt with them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them. “They will respect my son” he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, “This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him and take over his inheritance.” So they seized him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?’ They answered, ‘He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will deliver the produce to him when the season arrives.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the scriptures:

It was the stone rejected by the builders
that became the keystone.

This was the Lord’s doing
and it is wonderful to see?

‘I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.’

Reflection

On my walk along the River Severn last month I passed a vineyard. It had been planted several years ago, but was only just starting to produce a crop. That’s the thing with a vineyard – it’s a long term investment.

The Bible uses the imagery of the vineyard to describe God’s relationship with his people. In Isaiah the people of Israel are described as a vineyard, a project in which God invested, but which is yielding a bad crop of fruit. Jesus picks up on that imagery in this gospel passage, except this time the

problem is with the tenant-farmers rather than the crop. The hostility that Jesus describes of the tenant-farmers to the landlord is not some sort of peasants revolt – it is simply motivated by their greed.

The tenants stand for the religious leaders of Jesus' day, and in the judgement pronounced against them there is a call for fresh leadership of God's people, a leadership who will allow the vineyard to flourish and render to God the fruit.

The key to this new leadership is the son, who is thrown out of the vineyard and killed. In a similar way Jesus will be killed outside the vineyard, outside Jerusalem. Yet, like the stone that holds everything together so he will hold together the new building, the new vineyard that God is establishing through him. In this vineyard the fruits are peace and integrity, not greed and oppression.

Fr Philip Barnes SSC

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

11 October 2020

Gospel Reading

Matthew 22. 1-14

Jesus began to speak to the chief priests and elders of the people in parables: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. Next he sent some more servants. "Tell those who have been invited" he said "that I have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding." But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them. The king was furious. He despatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding." So these servants went out on to the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests. When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and

said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen.'

Reflection

The context in which today's parable is set could not really be clearer. The first people to be invited to the wedding feast were the Jews, but, Jesus said, they had refused the invitation. The people who were found outside at the cross-roads were the Gentiles, and, said Jesus, they were hearing God's invitation and accepting it. And the wedding feast is itself a code-word for the Messianic banquet, the kingdom of heaven. Yet again the Jewish leaders react with anger to the story Jesus tells. They were furious because they understood only too well that Jesus was telling them that the seats at the banquet which they had assumed were reserved for the Chosen People would instead be occupied by the despised Gentiles, those lesser races outside the Law. No wonder Matthew tells us in the verse which immediately follows this morning's extract that "the Pharisees went away to work out how to trap Jesus in what he said." In modern terms, they were 'out to get him'!

I suppose the story sounds a bit far-fetched. I mean, who would be so daft as to turn down an invitation to a royal wedding party? But, as we are all aware, people can be very foolish. There is in most of us a silly streak which not only refuses something good when it is offered, but can even fail to recognise that it is good. God is continually calling us, as individuals and as a Church, to a fuller and better life. His call is often quiet and gentle, but it is very real and very persistent. We all hear it from time to time, often welling up from somewhere deep inside our very being. But all too often, like the seed that fell among the thorns, the call from God gets choked off.

Fr John Hunter SSC

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

18 October 2020

Gospel Reading

Matthew 22. 15-21

The Pharisees went away to work out between them how to trap Jesus in what he said. And they sent their disciples to him, together with the Herodians, to say, ‘Master, we know that you are an honest man and teach the way of God in an honest way, and that you are not afraid of anyone, because a man’s rank means nothing to you. Tell us your opinion, then. Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not?’ But Jesus was aware of their malice and replied, ‘You hypocrites! Why do you set this trap for me? Let me see the money you pay the tax with.’ They handed him a denarius, and he said, ‘Whose head is this? Whose name?’ ‘Caesar’s’ they replied. He then said to them, ‘Very well, give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God.’

Reflection

The purpose of the question posed to Jesus is entrapment. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day resented rendering taxes to the pagan Roman government – it was a tangible reminder of the occupying power. If Jesus advocated its payment they would have questioned his allegiance to his Jewish faith. On the other hand, refusing to pay the denarius, stamped with the likeness of an Emperor who described himself as a god, would have been treasonous.

Jesus’ profoundly brilliant response circumvented the potential entrapment; that which belonged to the emperor should be returned to the emperor, that which belongs to God should be returned to God. Men and women, made in God’s image, are to give themselves to God in obedience to the divine will. Humanity belongs to God. St Augustine of Hippo writes: “God, like Caesar, demands from us the impression of God’s own image. Just as we repay Caesar’s coinage to Caesar, so return the soul to God, shining and stamped with the light of God’s countenance.”



Fr Philip Barnes SSC

Gospel Reading

Matthew 22. 34-40

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to disconcert him, one of them put a question, 'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?' Jesus said, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also.'

Reflection

Yet again, in today's Gospel reading, we have heard how Jesus' enemies tried to get the better of him by their questions. Of course, they were not really interested in his answers, nor were they simply trying to prove him wrong; they were just trying to find a way to silence him and - better still - destroy his influence over ordinary people by leading him into saying something which they could condemn as blasphemy against the Law of Moses, or as treason against the ruling power of Rome.

In between the reading for last Sunday in which Jesus avoided the trap set by the Pharisees, and today's in which they come back for another try, there is a passage in which the Sadducees had a go at trapping Jesus with a question about divorce. He had silenced them, and so, because the Pharisees and the Sadducees were at odds with one another, the Pharisees thought it would be worthwhile to come back with another question for Jesus, but only in an attempt to disconcert him (or 'to test him' as another translation puts it).

And the question asked by the Pharisees was this: "Which is the greatest commandment of the Law of Moses?" And today, we have heard Jesus make the point that you cannot separate the Law into bits and pieces. There is, in a sense, no one greatest commandment; the whole thing hangs together.

Fr John Hunter SSC

ALL SAINTS

1 November 2020

Gospel Reading

Matthew 5. 1-12a

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

‘How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy the gentle: they shall have the earth for their heritage.

Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied.

Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.

Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God.

Happy the peacemakers: they shall be called sons of God.

Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.’



Sermon on the Mount, (mosaic) 6th century; *Santi' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna*

Reflection

What are the beatitudes? On the face of it the answer is easy: the beatitudes are the blessings that Jesus spoke to his disciples as he began the intensive course of teaching that we know as the Sermon on the Mount. But actually that isn't quite right: the beatitudes are not *blessings*, nor in fact are they *commandments*. Jesus doesn't say, 'The Lord bless you who are meek' nor does he say 'Thou shalt be meek, for then thou shalt thou inherit the earth'; he simply says, 'Blessed (happy in this translation) are the meek'. The beatitudes, as we have them, are descriptions, not imperatives. Rowan Williams puts it like this: in giving us this teaching Jesus asks us to *look at these people; think about them*; 'these are the sorts of people and the sorts of situation where you will see something called blessedness'. Here – as you encounter the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake – here you come face to face with holiness. Actual lived holiness, not the theoretical idea of it we have in our minds.

What a wonderful invitation this is! It is, truly, a *mission* statement because it sends us to us look afresh at our world and our lives with a perspective given us by Christ. This is not, primarily, an *agenda* – another list of tasks to get on with. In the first place it is simply the opening of a window – *pulling back the curtains, throwing wide the shutters, flinging open the casement* – so that we can see clearly, breathe deeply and begin to understand who we are, where we are, here and now, through the eyes of Christ. Listen to the beatitudes, look at the people and the places they point us to: these are the kinds of people and places where you see true blessedness. And once we have listened and looked we trust that then we may have the grace and strength to join in.

Fr Philip Barnes SSC

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

8 November 2020

Please note that today is Remembrance Sunday, and the following Gospel passage which is set for today is used at the 9am Mass only. The 11am Sung Mass will be a Requiem for those who have fallen in war.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 25. 1-13

Jesus told this parable to his disciples: ‘The kingdom of heaven will be like this: Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were sensible: the foolish ones did take their lamps, but they brought no oil, whereas the sensible ones took flasks of oil as well as their lamps. The bridegroom was late, and they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight there was a cry, “The bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him.” At this, all those bridesmaids woke up and trimmed their lamps, and the foolish ones said to the sensible ones, “Give us some of your oil: our lamps are going out.” But they replied, “There may not be enough for us and for you; you had better go to those who sell it and buy some for yourselves.” They had gone off to buy it when the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding hall and the door was closed. The other bridesmaids arrived later. “Lord, Lord,” they said “open the door for us.” But he replied, “I tell you solemnly, I do not know you.” So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour.’

Reflection

The early Church had a great sense of expectation of the Lord's return. They expected it to be soon - indeed, very soon. As they suffered expulsion from the Jewish synagogues and persecution by the Roman authorities, they were eagerly looking forward to the time when their belief in the return of their Lord would vindicate their following of him, when all power and judgement would be his, and they, his faithful disciples, would see the reign of the King-Messiah begin over the whole world. Naturally, they were also looking forward to the fulfilment of his promise

that they, the new Israel, would sit on thrones as judges of the old Israel - indeed, of the whole world.

As we approach the end of another year in the Christian calendar, there is a powerful message in all of this for us. We are still awaiting the return of the Lord. Our constant prayer should be "Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!" But we cannot leave it at that and just sit back in idleness as we wait. The waiting time is when we should be doing the work the Master has left for us to do.

Fr John Hunter SSC

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

15 November 2020

Gospel Reading

Matthew 25. 14-30

Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples: "The kingdom of Heaven is like a man on his way abroad who summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to a third one; each in proportion to his ability. Then he set out.

"The man who had received the five talents promptly went and traded with them and made five more. The man who had received two made two more in the same way. But the man who had received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

"Now a long time after, the master of those servants came back and went through his accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents came forward bringing five more. "Sir," he said "you entrusted me with five talents; here are five more that I have made."

"His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness."

"Next the man with the two talents came forward. "Sir," he said "you entrusted me with two talents; here are two more that I have made." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness."

‘Last came forward the man who had the one talent. “Sir,” said he “I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered; so I was afraid, and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here it is; it was yours, you have it back.” But his master answered him, “You wicked and lazy servant! So you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered? Well then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have recovered my capital with interest. So now, take the talent from him and give it to the man who has the five talents. For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but from the man who has not, even what he has will be taken away. As for this good-for-nothing servant, throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.”’



The parable of the talents or minas, by Willem de Poorter, around 1640.

Reflection

First things first: by ‘talent’ in this parable we’re not talking about some special skill or ability, as in *Britain’s Got Talent*. A talent (*tálan-ton* in Greek) is a measure of weight: roughly seventy-five pounds of silver, or the equivalent of 6000 *denarii*, wages for sixteen and a half years. The wretched servant is going to great lengths to hide an enormous treasure.

In the parable the Master who goes on a journey entrusts his possessions to his servants. Seeing that the Master is God, his possessions, or rather ‘those things over which he has charge’, must be something utterly precious. It is something that belongs to God by right and which he yet entrusts to humans to share in. Thus the refusal of the *tálan-ton* is a refusal of God’s gifts for us.

The *tálan* left uninvested stands for entry into a world suffused with grace, a grace that works within our lives to create forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. ‘Take back what is yours’ the wretched servant says, throwing away the life of grace. Whereas the others who are using what they are given stand for the way in which, through a life of active love, we can work with that gift that God offers to all.

Fr Philip Barnes SSC

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

22 November 2020

Gospel Reading

Matthew 25. 31-46

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left.

‘Then the King will say to those on his right hand, “Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me.” Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?” And the King will answer, “I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.”

‘Next he will say to those on his left hand, “Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food; I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink; I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, naked and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me.” Then it will be their turn to ask, “Lord, when did we

see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?” Then he will answer, “I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.”

‘And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life.’

Reflection

Jesus came to this world to be King, but his idea of kingship was the very opposite of what the world thought. For the men and women of his day, kingdom meant power, the destruction of enemies, the conquering of new lands. To them it meant driving out the Roman occupiers, and regaining the political freedom of the kingdom of Israel. They were looking back to the days of Saul and David and Solomon, the ancient kings of the Jewish nation. Jesus was looking forward to a kingdom that ruled the hearts and minds of men and women of every nation. He had no intention of letting them make him the sort of king that they wanted. He came to this earth that they might freely accept him as the king of the way they lived their lives. He wanted them and us to let the rules of his kingdom be the guidelines of their and our lives.

In the one, simple prayer that Jesus taught us, he told us to ask the Father, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Those are the words we say every time we use the Lord’s Prayer, but they must also be the sum of our actions. The Kingdom of God is built up by thousands and thousands of little acts, most of which are hidden or go unremarked, but each one of us can be involved every day of our lives in the building of the Kingdom.

Fr John Hunter SSC

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