



WELCOME TO ST PETER'S ASH



THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AT ST PETER'S IS CALLED TO CELEBRATE, LIVE AND REFLECT THE LOVE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST

24th MAY 2020

EASTER 7

<u>READINGS FOR TODAY</u> Acts 1 v 6 - 14; 1 Peter 4 v 12 – 14 & 5 v 6 - 11; John 17 v 1 - 11	PARISH OFFICE: Closed until further notice. TEL:01252 331161; e- mail: office@saint-peters-ash.org.uk BOOKINGS OF WEDDINGS & BAPTISMS – 01252 321517 WEBSITE: www.saint-peters-ash.org.uk
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***ALLELUIA, CHRIST IS RISEN & ASCENDED!
HE IS RISEN & ASCENDED INDEED, ALLELUIA!***



WHERE IS THE JOY? SOME WORDS OF INSPIRATION FROM POPE FRANCIS

The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew.

The great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience. Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades. This is a very real danger for believers too. Many fall prey to it, and end up resentful, angry and listless. That is no way to live a dignified and fulfilled life; it is not God's will for us, nor is it the life in the Spirit which has its source in the heart of the risen Christ.

I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unflinchingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord". The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms. God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy. Christ, who told us to forgive one another "seventy times seven" (Mt 18:22) has given us his example: he has forgiven us seventy times seven. Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love. With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew. Let us not flee from the resurrection of Jesus, let us never give up, come what will. May nothing inspire more than his life, which impels us onwards!

There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter. I realize of course that joy is not expressed the same way at all times in life, especially at moments of great difficulty. Joy adapts and changes, but it always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved. I understand the grief of people who have to endure great suffering, yet slowly but surely we all have to let the joy of faith slowly revive as a quiet yet firm trust, even amid the greatest distress: 'This I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness...'(Lamentations 3)

(extracts from 'The joy of the gospel' by Pope Francis in 2013)

COLLECT FOR EASTER 7

O God the King of glory,
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ
with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:
we beseech you, leave us not comfortless,
but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us
and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is
gone before,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

DON'T FORGET OUR ST PETER'S PRAYER CHAIN

If you would like emergency prayer for yourself or somebody else please phone: 01252 322292 or 01252 323037 – this is a confidential service.

There is a free national phone line 'Daily Hope' that offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services. Available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044**

A MESSAGE FROM OUR TREASURER SHEILA TAYLOR

I have had many questions about the "envelope" giving, what should you do with it? If you would like to make payment to the PCC, bank details are as follows:

Bank: Natwest Bank Plc. 30 Wellington Street, Aldershot. GU11 1AE
Account Name: PCC of St Peter's, Ash
Account Number: 50140256
Sort Code: 60 01 08

Please make sure you include your name.

Or you could write a cheque and send it to me, enclosing one of the weekly envelopes. Send your cheque to: Father Keith, The Rectory, Ash Church Road, Ash, Surrey. GU12 6LU Thank you on behalf of the PCC and keep safe and keep well.

Morning Prayer to share at 10 am on Sunday

If there is more than one person present, someone may wish to read the parts marked (L), everyone says the rest together. You can say alternate verses in the Psalm and in the Canticle. Have a Bible to hand.

(L) Alleluia, Christ is risen and ascended!

All: He is risen and ascended indeed, Alleluia!

(L) O Lord, open our lips

All: and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

(L) In your resurrection and ascension, O Christ

All: let heaven and earth rejoice. Alleluia.

You may wish to light a candle at this point

(L): The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind:

All: 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.

Pause to call to mind our sins and confess them to God:

(L): You raise the dead to life in the Spirit:
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

(L): You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart:
Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

(L): You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided:
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

All say The Gloria:

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.
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.

Say the Collect for Easter 7 (see previous page)

Read Acts 1 v 6 - 14 followed by Psalm 68 v 1 - 10 & 32 - 35, concluding with:

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

Read 1 Peter 4 v 12 - 14 & 5 v 6 - 11

All: Alleluia, alleluia. Go and make disciples of all nations, says the Lord. Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Alleluia!

Now read John 17 v 1 - 11. Here are some thoughts from Fr Keith on today's readings:

'This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' Those words of Jesus are maybe a bit puzzling. People have got many pictures of what 'eternal life' may be like, and that usually depends on what interests you have had in your life here on earth! A keen golfer may picture 'eternal life' to be everlasting rounds on the most superb course imaginable, with the best 19th hole ever, thrown in. Musicians may be looking forward to lots of perfect singing from the heavenly choir. Gourmets may be anticipating Michelin dining at the 'heavenly banquet' so often spoken of in the Bible'. But, none of that seems to fit with what Jesus is saying here, maybe, it doesn't even sound as exciting.*

As human beings our thoughts are filled mostly with the actions that we undertake day by day. Work, family life, hobbies, sport, travel, food and drink are all important to us - from keeping our bodies alive, to entertaining us. Very few people spend much, if any, of their time in just 'getting to know God'. We may spare a little time each day for prayer, and a little more time once or twice a week in church - but even there we can get impatient if the service goes on too long! Anything over the hour is usually thought to be too much of an ask for busy people! (Not quite what the disciples were doing when they returned to Jerusalem after the ascension - 'constantly devoting themselves to prayer!')

So, what is Jesus promising us here? What could an eternity of 'knowing the Father and Jesus Christ, whom he sent', actually be like? Well it sounds a lot less hectic! Eternity, in these terms, sounds reflective and peaceful, and that shouldn't come as a surprise to those of us who pray frequently for the souls of the faithful departed: 'rest eternal, grant to them O Lord'. If we really mean that as our prayer for our loved ones, then it seems to accord very well with what Jesus is saying here.

Let's think for a moment about the nature of God. He is the creator of all things, the source of all wisdom and truth. His knowledge goes beyond anything we can ever ask or think. All the good things that we enjoy on earth are only here because of that creativity and His generosity in giving us tools and intelligence to work with him. But, whatever we can appreciate here can surely only be a tiny part of His infinite capacity to create and give. There must be so much more to know about God than we can ever take in in a human life span. When Jesus talks about 'the words that you gave me, I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me,' we know that making this step of faith is only the beginning of a journey into a closer relationship with, and knowledge of the Father. There is much more to come - elsewhere, Jesus says that the Spirit will lead us into all truth. What begins here at Pentecost will surely go on into eternity and it certainly won't be boring if it comes from God Himself!

I can't pretend to have a better picture than anyone else about what life in eternity will actually look like. But 'knowing the one true God, and Jesus Christ' for ever and ever, sounds pretty exciting to me - yes, even more than music, travel, food or anything else. And, I believe that we won't be alone - Jesus prays that we may be one, just as he and the Father are one. Fellow members of Christ's Body will be with us. We won't have to be concerned with all of those things to do with staying alive or keeping entertained anymore. Getting to know God more and more will be enough - wrapped, as we will be, in the arms of His love for ever. Now that's something to look forward to!

Pause for your own reflections, and then we say:

- All* Christ has gone up on high
and has led captivity captive. Alleluia.
- 1 Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, ♦
who has come to his people and set them free.
- 2 He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, ♦
born of the house of his servant David.
- 3 Through his holy prophets God promised of old ♦
to save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all that hate us,
- 4 To show mercy to our ancestors, ♦
and to remember his holy covenant.
- 5 This was the oath God swore to our father
Abraham: ♦
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
- 6 Free to worship him without fear, ♦
holy and righteous in his sight
all the days of our life.
- 7 And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the
Most High, ♦
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
- 8 To give his people knowledge of salvation ♦
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
- 9 In the tender compassion of our God ♦
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
- 10 To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the
shadow of death, ♦
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

All Christ has gone up on high
and has led captivity captive. Alleluia.

Let us join our prayers with those of our Saviour Christ,
seeking the Father's blessing and the gifts of the Spirit.

(L) Jesus Christ, great high priest,
living for ever to intercede for us,
pray for the Church, your broken body in the world.
Give strength to those living in fear because of war and
persecution, may their faith remain firm. Lord, hear us.
All Lord, graciously hear us.

(L) Jesus Christ, king of righteousness,
enthroned at the right hand of the majesty on high,
pray for the world, and make it subject to your rule.
Be with the leaders of the nations in the difficult
decisions they are having to make in this time of crisis.
Lord, hear us.
All Lord, graciously hear us.

(L) Jesus Christ, Son of Man,
drawing humanity into the life of God,
pray for your brothers and sisters in need, distress or
sorrow, all those battling the Corona virus, and those
feeling lonely and anxious in the lockdown.
Lord, hear us.
All Lord, graciously hear us.

(L) Jesus Christ, pioneer of our salvation,

bringing us to glory through your death and resurrection,
surround with your saints and angels
those who have died trusting your promises.
Lord, hear us.
All Lord, graciously hear us.

(L) Jesus Christ, Lord over all things,
ascended far above the heavens and filling the universe,
pray for us who receive the gifts you give us for work in
your service, may we always be mindful of the needs of
others, and never tire of doing good. Lord, hear us.
All Lord, graciously hear us.

(L) Jesus Christ, keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit
and in the bond of peace, and bring the whole created
order to worship at your feet; for you are alive and reign
with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God,
now and for ever. *All* Amen.

As Jesus taught us, so we pray: Our Father in heaven....

This hymn may then be said or sung twice:

Majesty, worship his majesty
Unto Jesus be glory, honour and praise
Majesty, kingdom authority flow from his throne
Unto his own: his anthem raise.
So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus
Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus the King.
Majesty, worship his majesty
Jesus who died now glorified
King of all kings.

Let us pray:

Eternal God, giver of love and power, your Son Jesus
Christ has sent us into all the world to preach the gospel
of his kingdom: confirm us in this mission, and help us to
live the good news we proclaim; through Jesus Christ our
Lord. Amen.

Risen, ascended Lord, as we rejoice at your triumph,
fill your Church on earth with power and compassion,
that all who are estranged by sin may find forgiveness
and know your peace, to the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

(L): Alleluia. Christ is risen.
All: He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

May God the Son, who is our great high priest passed into
the heavens, plead for us at the right hand of the Father,
and may the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of
God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all
now and always. Amen.

(L) Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.
All: Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.

All: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace, and rise with Christ in glory.
Amen.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SOULS OF THE RECENTLY DEPARTED,
ESPECIALLY:

ROY LAMB; CALEB PERFECT; JOHNNY JONES
ANNIE TYLER (Annie was a member of our Flower Guild for many
years, and a great supporter of St Peter's)

READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK – PENTECOST

Acts 2 v 1 - 21; 1 Corinthians 12 v 3b - 13; John 20 v 19 - 23

HAPPY BIRTHDAY THIS WEEK TO:
DAVID CROW (25TH)

Evening Prayer for the Easter Season (6)

O lord open our lips,
and our mouth shall show forth your praise.

O God make speed to save us.
O Lord, make haste to help us.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us,
and clothe your people with power from on high. Alleluia.

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,
to you be glory and praise for ever.
Raised to your right hand on high
the ascended Christ shows the prints of love
and bestows on us the gifts of grace.
As your Spirit renews the face of the earth,
may we bring forth the fruit of the Spirit
and reveal your glory in all the world.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be God for ever.

This hymn may be said or sung:

The head that once was crowned with thorns
is crowned with glory now;
a royal diadem adorns
the mighty Victor's brow.

The highest place that heaven affords
is his, is his by right,
the King of kings, and Lord of lords,
and heaven's eternal Light;

The joy all of all who dwell above,
the joy of all below,
to whom he manifests his love
and grants his Name to know.

To them the cross with all its shame,
with all its grace is given;
their name, an everlasting name;
their joy, the joy of heaven.

They suffer with their Lord below,
they reign with him above,
their profit and their joy to know
the mystery of his love.

The cross he bore is life and health,
though shame and death to him:
his people's hope, his people's wealth,
their everlasting theme.

We pray:

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your mercy come down upon us
to cleanse our hearts
and set us free to sing your praise
now and for ever Amen.

A Psalm is said: Mon 18; Tue 68; Wed 46; Thurs 139; Fri 147; Sat 48, ending with:

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever.
Amen.

Scripture Readings:

*Monday – Deuteronomy 31 v 1 - 13, 1 John 2 v 18 - end
Tuesday – Deuteronomy 31 v 14 - 29, 1 John 3 v 1 - 10
Weds – Deuteronomy 31 v 30 to 32 v 14, 1 John 3 v 11 - end*

*Thurs – Deuteronomy 32 v 15 - 47; 1 John 4 v 1 - 6
Fri - Deuteronomy 33, 1 John 4 v 7 - end
Sat – Deuteronomy 16 v 9 - 15; John 15 v 26 to 16 v 5*

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free
from the law of sin and death.

All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of
God; for we have received the Spirit that enables us to
cry, 'Abba, Father'.

The Spirit himself bears witness that we are children of
God and if God's children, then heirs of God;
If heirs of God, then fellow-heirs with Christ; since we
suffer with him now, that we may be glorified with him.
These sufferings that we now endure are not worth
comparing to the glory that shall be revealed.
For the creation waits with eager longing for the
revealing of the children of God.

Gospel Cantic: The Magnificat (The Song of Mary)

How excellent is your name in all the world, you have set
your glory above the heavens. Alleluia.

1) My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit
rejoices in God my Saviour; he has looked with favour on
his lowly servant.

2) From this day all generations will call me blessed; the
Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his
name.

3) He has mercy on those who fear him, from generation
to generation.

4) He has shown strength with his arm and has scattered
the proud in their conceit.

5) Casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting
up the lowly.

6) He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the
rich away empty.

7) He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, to
remember his promise of mercy.

8) The promise made to our ancestors, to Abraham and
his children for ever.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever.
Amen.

How excellent is your name in all the world, you have set
your glory above the heavens. Alleluia.

*Prayers of thanksgiving are made for the day that is
ending. Intercessions are offered for the church, the world
and for individuals, the sick and the departed.
Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:*

Our Father, who art in heaven ...

O God the King of glory,
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ
with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:
we beseech you, leave us not comfortless,
but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us
and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is
gone before, who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray, and in your great
mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night,

for the love of your only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Sermon for this Sunday from Bishop Jo

I'm preaching to you from lockdown. I'm recording this from an upper room, from the loft in fact. Recent world events make it necessary. I'm speaking of trauma and death. And now a lot of revised normal and anxiety.

And I realise as never before that our situation today has parallels with that of the first disciples, the apostles. For them the trauma was Christ's crucifixion, then there was a new normal – for 40 days - of resurrection. And now there's his sudden departure, his ascension. Amidst all the uncertainty and anxiety, one thing clear. And that was the instruction to wait back in that upper room on mount Olivet near Jerusalem. To wait. In prayer and devotion. Self-isolating and probably getting food delivered. Confused, Reflective, Yet expectant. Surely wondering: where is God now? Why have we been abandoned? What is God saying? What will happen next? And how will this all end?

A time of tremendous transition and transformation. Yet loss of control. Can only seek to sit pretty and befriend the conditions and the circumstance. Seizing the opps. Digging deep. Sitting still. Acknowledging the absence. Working out the questions. I note that's a lot of what is happening around our land in our households. There's prayer and devotion – 4x as many accessing prayer apps. There's so much self-reflection and self-conscious engagement with one another – whether in watching a play online and discussing it, or reading and joining a book gp to discuss it, or connecting with neighbours to share a birthday. And finally so much willingness to raise the existential questions, to explore the meaning of life, to join a faith enquirers' group.

And so today I want to explore with you this situation of the Ascension: what's it all about? why does Jesus do this? Just when he's been raised, when he's demonstrated how life conquers death, does he not stick around? Why does he leave the disciples alone and vulnerable, as if claiming retirement? What does the Ascension teach us? 3 things.

The first thing the Ascension tells us is that Jesus had done everything he needed to do. He really had given us everything we needed to receive. Jesus stopped because he'd finished. Salvation is complete in Christ. This claim is at the heart of Christian theology. But the doctrine of the Ascension isn't very fashionable because we tend to focus more on what God hasn't done than on what God has done. God has given us life, given us creation, given us covenant friendship, restored that friendship over and over, given us Jesus, given us forgiveness, given us eternal life... We so readily take all that for granted. Instead we ask: what about hunger, what about disasters, what about war, *what about a pandemic?* It's as if we feel undersold: as if the contents of salvation aren't what it said on the side of the tin so we want our money back.

And into our litany of what's wrong with God comes the doctrine of the Ascension. Jesus went back where he came from because he'd finished. He didn't hang around to work on a few odd jobs around the edges of salvation – *there was no more to do.* He'd finished. Now a lot of us rebels against this – surely there's plenty left unredeemed in the world. 'What about restoring the kingdom to Israel?' ask the disciples. How can Jesus have finished, when the world

looks like this? The truth is, he'd done what only God could do, what matters most – he'd taken the sting out of sin, he'd shown us the heart of God, and he'd broken through the wall of death - and now he was leaving the rest to others; to us.

And now to a second thing about Jesus' Ascension. Where did the bodily person of Jesus go? Wherever Jesus went when he went up, he went somewhere – and that that somewhere is at least as real as here. I say "at least as real" because it may be more real. This life is passing, everything in this existence is relative, this world will one day pass away: but where Jesus is, at the right hand of the Father, is for keeps. What we call "heaven" is the company of God – the presence of God where all are gathered as God's companions.

Imagine it for a moment. There's another world, more real than this one. That means this life is a rehearsal. You don't have to get it all done, you don't have to leave it all apple-pie, you don't have to ensure it for ever remains just the way it is now. Jesus has gone to the place where all is as it should be, and the promise of the coming kingdom is that God's heaven will someday come to God's earth, so that all is finally as it should be. Not because you and I got it right, but because God said 'It is finished.' That releases us from the depression that says there's nothing to look forward to. We have everything to look forward to. The real world is not this one: the real real world is the one where Jesus went.

And that brings us to the third lesson from the doctrine of the Ascension. We find it in the words of the two men in white robes who speak to the disciples after a cloud has taken Jesus from their sight: "Why do you stand looking upward towards heaven?" In other words, Jesus may have finished, but this could mean a whole new beginning for you. Don't just look back: look forwards. This isn't an end – it's not a retirement – unless retirement is about time to rethink what discipleship looks like for a new era. No matter what stage of life we are at, no matter how deep the lockdown, those words "Why do you stand looking up to heaven?" are a challenge to us to remember that God still has good things in store, that the best is yet to come, that the future is always bigger than the past.

So while waiting in lockdown for that future to open up, the disciples surely had chance to reflect on what Jesus' ascension revealed to them. And us. It shows us he had finished, and thus that salvation doesn't depend on us, but on him. It shows us that there is another place more real than this one, and so that we don't have to hold out in this life till we have everything just right. And it shows us that there's no use lamenting what's gone because there are fresh discoveries in discipleship ahead.

Why did Jesus ask them to wait back in that upper room? Not to furlough them on some job retention scheme; not to jeopardise their mental health; not so that the machinery of government could issue a further set of non-statutory guidance documents to help order their phased return by 1st June. But to give them space: to ponder and pray, to reflect and receive, to explore and enquire – to wait on God in longing for 'Thy Kingdom Come'. And without rushing this vital time of transition, to look forward to a further work of God's transformation. This time God is working in us, and through us, transforming some shakey disciples to be courageous witnesses, bearers of God's transforming presence in the world: 'stay in the city, for you will be clothed with power from on high.

(Also available to watch online)