



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

2nd MAY 2021

EASTER 5

<u>READINGS FOR TODAY</u>	PARISH OFFICE: Please use e-mail to make contact TEL:01252 331161; e- mail: office@saint-peters-ash.org.uk BOOKINGS OF WEDDINGS & BAPTISMS – phone for an appointment on 01252 321517 WEBSITE: www.saint-peters-ash.org.uk
Acts 8 v 26 - end	
1 John 4 v 7 - end	
John 15 v 1 - 8	

ASCENSION DAY

THURSDAY 13TH MAY

PARISH COMMUNION IN CHURCH at 7 – 30 pm

ONLINE WORSHIP

With the expected further easing of Lockdown restrictions on 17th May our provision of worship online will be changing. From Sunday 23rd May – Pentecost we will be live-streaming our 10 am Parish Communion service from church. This means that we will no longer be putting a service of Morning Prayer on our website after 16th May. The text of the Parish Communion will be posted on the website for those at home to follow, together with the text of the sermon and hymns.

In church from 23rd of May we will have a small group to sing hymns, but at this stage congregational singing will still not be permitted. We hope that up to 30 people will be permitted to meet for a chat after the service in the Rectory Garden from that date.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

SUNDAY 16TH MAY at 10 – 45 am

IN CHURCH

Nomination forms are available for churchwardens and 4 places on the PCC. If you are not on the Electoral Roll there are application forms available, once completed please hand them to Fr Keith or Pauline Baxter. Only those on the electoral roll can vote at the meeting.

THY KINGDOM COME

Thy Kingdom Come (TKC) is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus. With the Archbishop of Canterbury wanting to focus on evangelism when he visits this diocese 24th - 27th September, we are suggesting that parishes might like to take the TKC initiative for church members to pray for 5 friends from Ascension through to his visit in September.

Ceri Hurcombe is organising 'Prayer Triplets' for the 11 days between Ascension and Pentecost to get more people praying together. If you are interested in joining in please contact her.

SOME THOUGHTS FROM FR. KEITH ON TODAY'S READINGS

I clearly remember the first time I encountered wine growing in France. It was many years ago, and long before English wine growing had really got off the ground. I was excited by seeing names 'in the flesh,' as it were, that previously I had only seen on bottle labels. The row after row of carefully tended vines descending the hillsides in Burgundy were an impressive sight and, of course, the 'degustation' – wine-tastings, were an added bonus along the way!

As any wine grower will tell you, making good wine is an art. Left to their own device's vines do not turn themselves into great vintages, much hard work and loving care goes into each bottle that is later enjoyed. The same can be said of making good disciples – hard work and loving care is needed, and this is why, in today's Gospel, we read of Jesus using the imagery of wine making with regard to His relationship with us who have chosen to follow Him.

In Jesus' words, God the Father is the vine-grower, the one in charge of the vintage. We are the vine branches who need pruning at times in order to bear more fruit, and always need to be connected to the main vine – Jesus – if we are to bear fruit at all. 'I am the vine, you are the branches' says Jesus and we have to maintain a living connection with Him always, otherwise we will wither and be thrown away.

It is a powerful image, and one which makes a similar point to St Paul, when he talks about us being members of Christ's Body. I've lost count of the number of people who've excused themselves from coming to church by telling me that they don't need to do that to be a Christian. The assumption is that being a Christian is a purely individualistic pursuit, that it is purely about 'me and God'. But from the words of Jesus and Paul we see that that is not the case. Of course, we initially come to Jesus as individuals and we never lose our individuality, but Christianity is always about being part of a community of believers – not merely a scattering of individuals. Just as the vine brings nourishment to the branches connected to it, so does Jesus nourish us, particularly of course in the Blessed Sacrament. But also, just as in the vineyard, the branches need to be linked together to flourish, so too, should Christians be linked together in order to nourish and support one another and be able to do the work that God wants us to do for Him.

During this past year we have seen the damage that can be done when people are cut off from one another and feel isolated. As human beings, as the creation story in Genesis observes, we were not meant to be alone. It has been wonderful to see how so many people have made extra efforts to link up with neighbours, especially the elderly, to do shopping and get prescriptions etc. Now, as lockdown restrictions begin to be eased, it is important that those efforts are continued and we don't return to selfish ways as a nation. We will still need one another.

But, returning specifically to the Christian community, what should we be taking from today's Gospel as the Church itself moves out of lockdown? Certainly, keeping our focus on Jesus for guidance and support, as we enter this new era, is paramount. If we try to make plans without Him they will not bear fruit. More prayer and study of God's word should be at the top of our list of actions. But also, we need to spend more time just waiting on God and listening to Him. Jesus promises that if we abide in Him and He in us we can ask for whatever we wish and it will be done for us. Of course, that isn't a promise that we can pray to win the lottery, for example, and God will arrange for it to happen! If we truly abide in Jesus, we won't be making such selfish requests, but, rather, asking for those things that will advance God's Kingdom and enable us to support and nourish one another. Putting ourselves at Jesus' disposal in other words.

Our reading from Acts this morning shows us the fruits of doing that. Philip responds positively to the angel who tells him to 'get up and go'. As a result, he is led to witness to a eunuch from the court of the Queen of the Ethiopians. The eunuch needs help in understanding the scriptures, he needs Philip to explain them to him – just like so many of our family, friends and neighbours today. He is converted to the faith because Philip is allowing himself to be used in God's service. The eunuch then continues his journey home as a Christian and is able to witness to others in his turn.

Tradition has it that this was, indeed, the start of the church in Ethiopia, and so it predated the colonial missionary activities in much of the rest of Africa in the nineteenth century. Philip's work was a success, not because of his own efforts, but because he was 'abiding in Jesus' and obedient to the will of God the vine grower. The vine was established in Ethiopia and flourished there because of that close bond between Philip and his risen Lord.

Some people argue that we are living in an increasingly secular society and that our Churches are becoming largely irrelevant. I would disagree with that analysis. Certainly, the number of people regularly coming into our buildings has decreased in recent years, but that doesn't mean that people aren't still searching for meaning in their lives and spiritual guidance. Like Philip, we are being asked to 'get up and go' and speak to those, like that Ethiopian, who are searching and who are lacking understanding of the things of God now. We can't make any assumptions about what people already know these days. Like Philip we need to share our experience of God with them, and be honest with them too about our own doubts and struggles. Lockdown has made many people look at their lives afresh and question what their priorities should be in the future. As Jesus said on another occasion '*the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few.*' There are many opportunities for witness just waiting for us, and whatever our age or experience, God can use us in that harvest if we respond to his call.

Let us then rise to the challenge of working together and showing people that Christianity is very much alive and relevant today. Taking our nourishment from Jesus, the

vine, He will strengthen us in his service if we are willing to let him, and if we are willing to risk the pruning that we sometimes need – when we have to realise that it's not our plans that are important but God's.

We all need to remember Jesus' saying that '*My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.*' So, to God be the glory, now and to all eternity. Amen.

Congratulations to those celebrating their birthday, especially: ROD SMITH (4TH); ANGELA MARSHALL (8TH)

Morning Prayer 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 Canticles. Please have a Bible to hand.

(L) Alleluia, Christ is risen!
All: He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

(L) O Lord, open our lips
All: and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

(L) In your resurrection, O Christ,
All: let heaven and earth rejoice. Alleluia.

A candle may be lit

- 1 Bless the Lord all you works of the Lord: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 2 Bless the Lord you heavens: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 3 Bless the Lord you angels of the Lord: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 4 Bless the Lord all people on earth: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 5 O people of God bless the Lord: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 6 Bless the Lord you priests of the Lord: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 7 Bless the Lord you servants of the Lord: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 8 Bless the Lord all you of upright spirit: ♦
bless the Lord you that are holy and humble in heart.

All Bless the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.

This hymn is said or sung:

*A new commandment
I give unto you,
That you love one another
As I have loved you,
That you love one another
As I have loved you.*

By this shall all know
That you are My disciples,
If you have love one for another.
By this shall all know
That you are My disciples,
If you have love one for another.

Chorus

You Are my friends if
You do what I command you.

Without my help you can nothing.
You Are my friends if
You do what I command you.
Without my help you can nothing

Chorus

I am the true Vine,
My Father is the gard'ner,
Abide in me: I will be with you.
I am the true Vine,
My Father is the gard'ner,
Abide in me: I will be with you.

Chorus

True Love is patient,
Nor arrogant, nor boastful.
Love bears all things, love is eternal.
True Love is patient,
Nor arrogant, nor boastful.
Love bears all things, love is eternal

Chorus

(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.

(L) Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us. Let us therefore rejoice by putting away all malice and evil and confessing our sins with a sincere and true heart.

Pause to call to mind our sins and then we confess them:

Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins,
and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.
We have lived by our own strength,
and not by the power of your resurrection.
We have lived by the light of our own eyes,
as faithless and not believing.
We have lived for this world alone,
and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us.
Lord, hear us and help us.

(L) God of love and power we ask you to forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by your Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. Amen.

The collect for Easter 5:

Almighty God,
who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life:
grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires,
so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect;
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Read Acts 8 v 26 - end then Psalm 22 v 25 - end 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 John 4 v 7 - end

(L) Alleluia, alleluia. I am the first and the last, says the Lord, and the living one; I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.

All: Alleluia.

Now read John 15 v 1 - 8

Fr Keith has written some thoughts for today – see above.

(L) Let us affirm our faith:

All: We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again 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.

We 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 worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

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

All Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. Alleluia.
He has defeated the powers of death. Alleluia.
Jesus turns our sorrow into dancing. Alleluia.
He has the words of eternal life. Alleluia.

We now say 'The Benedictus' together:

All: The Lord is risen from the tomb
who for our sakes hung upon the tree. 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: The Lord is risen from the tomb
who for our sakes hung upon the tree. Alleluia.

Prayers of intercession now follow

Heavenly Father, as we bring our prayers to you, we ask that we hear your voice, see your glory and receive your grace, so that we may tell others of you. We pray for the Church of Christ gathering all around the world. Give each of us a sense of expectation as we gather together, and fill us with wisdom and understanding as we go about our day to day lives. Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer.

Gracious Lord, we ask that you bless those who teach and preach the message of salvation and we pray especially for Bishop Andrew away on study leave at present, and for Bishop Jo. We pray too for our Archdeacons, Paul and Martin, for the Clergy and Lay Readers in the Diocese who seek to do your will and help to guide and support people through their spiritual and worldly journeys. Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer

Lord God, we give thanks for the blessings of the freedom we enjoy in this country. In this election week we pray for all those who will take up positions of responsibility. We ask that you give them strength, wisdom and courage to carry out their duties in a way that is in the best interests of all people. We pray too for those places where dictators rule and there is no freedom to do and say as you please – give those who live in such places hope for the future. Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer

Heavenly Father we pray for our families, for our friends and for those in the wider community. We pray for the young, that they may increase in wisdom as they learn about the world around them. We pray for those facing changes, that they may find hope and excitement in what lies ahead. We pray for the vulnerable and weak, for those who are weighed down with the burdens of life. Give them strength and courage Lord; help lighten their load. Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer

We pray for all those who are suffering through illness, we pray for those who are in hospital or at home. We especially pray for those who are sick with the Corona Virus. And we particularly pray for the people of India at this time. Give good health and courage to those working in the overcrowded hospitals and for those helping to provide the equipment and medicines needed. We pray for those who are suffering emotionally and mentally at this time, especially the young who feel their world is crowding in on them. Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer

We thank you Lord for the lives of those who have died recently. We pray for our Queen Elizabeth and all who mourn at this time. May they know the presence of your

peace and comfort in their loss. Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer

We ask that your prayers may be joined to those of Mary, Peter and all the saints as we commend ourselves and each other to your unfailing love, saying:

Merciful Father, accept these prayers

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

The following hymn may be said or sung:

Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it,
For by His power each tree and flower
was planned and made.
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it;
sun, moon and stars in heaven cry: Jesus is Lord!

*Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!
Praise Him with 'Hallelujahs',
for Jesus is Lord!*

Jesus is Lord! Yet from His throne eternal
in flesh He came to die in pain on Calvary's tree.
Jesus is Lord! From Him all life proceeding,
yet gave His life a ransom thus setting us free.
Jesus is Lord....

Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror,
from death He rose and all His foes shall own His name.
Jesus is Lord! God sends His Holy Spirit
to show by works of power that Jesus is Lord.
Jesus is Lord....

Let us pray:

(L) Risen Christ,
your wounds declare your love for the world
and the wonder of your risen life:
give us compassion and courage
to risk ourselves for those we serve,
to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

(L) Eternal God,
whose Son Jesus Christ is the way,
the truth, and the life:
grant us to walk in his way,
to rejoice in his truth,
and to share his risen life;
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. Amen.

(L) May the God of peace,
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep,
through the blood of the eternal covenant,
make us perfect in every good work to do his will,
working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight;
and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all today
and always. Amen.

(L) May the risen Christ grant us the joys of eternal life.
All 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.