



**DURHAM
CATHEDRAL**

THE SHRINE OF ST CUTHBERT

Praying Together

during the week beginning Sunday 2 May 2021

The Fifth Sunday of Easter

During this time of anxiety and uncertainty, we want to stay in touch with our regular worshippers and indeed with everyone who is associated with the cathedral family. Worshippers may attend the daily services of Morning and Evening Prayer as well as the daily Eucharist at 12.30 p.m. and may book to attend the two celebrations of the Eucharist on Sunday as well as Sunday Evensong at 3.30 p.m. (without booking).

Durham Cathedral is also still open for private prayer and quiet reflection. If you'd like to come to the Cathedral for services and for prayer, there are some important measures we'd like you to know about, to ensure the safety of members of the public and staff. You can find this information on our website: www.durhamcathedral.co.uk We will continue to live stream services as well so that you will still be able to engage with us online.

Gospel

John 15. 1-8

Jesus said, 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. '

Thought for the Day

by the Very Reverend Andrew Tremlett

Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Or 'La Reyne le veult'.

Thursday afternoon saw one of the more arcane, enchanting, but nonetheless significant happenings in Parliament when the current session, which started in December 2019 following the last Election, came to an end and both Houses were 'prorogued'. It is political theatre as only the British can muster: in the absence of Her Majesty the Queen, five Royal Commissioners – including the Lord Speaker and the Leader of the House of Lords – are empowered to summon the House of Commons and draw the session of Parliament to a close. Black Rod is dispatched to the 'other House' where she bids members of the Commons to attend. Standing at the Bar of the House of Lords, the Speaker, Serjeant-at-Arms and others attend while the Reading Clerk runs through the list of Bills which have received Royal Assent and passed into Law in the lifetime of this Parliament. Accompanied by much doffing of bicorne hats, there is a memorable foray into 12th century Norman French: *'La Reyne remercie ses bons sujets, accepte leur benevolence, et ainsi le veult'*, handily shortened to *'La Reyne le veult'*. The Queen wills it. This elaborate ritual is a way of drawing a line under one session of Parliament, before the Queen's Speech at the State Opening announces the legislative programme in the next session. And while it's easy to dismiss this as political theatre, what it represents is the fruit of parliamentary work over the past 18 months. The new legislation included: Trade Act, Counter-Terrorism and Sentencing Act, Domestic Abuse Act, Fire Safety Act. And there, at the very bottom of the list, was the Cathedrals Measure 2021. The new governance framework, passed by General Synod and the Houses of Parliament. Durham has serious skin in the game: Bishop Paul steered it through the House of Lords last week, Durham's own Baroness Sherlock was part of the original working group; I will be chairing the national training programme.

Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Or perhaps more sharply in Matthew 7: Thus you will know them by their fruits.

But, of course, none of this has reached any headline that you or I are likely to have read. No news bulletin will carry a story celebrating the completion of a good piece of legislative work. Instead the kind of fruit we as the public are apparently interested in is the pressing question of whether it matters if the Prime Minister habitually lies or not? Does it matter whether Boris Johnson paid for the redecoration of the No10 Flat himself? - though as a loyal John Lewis customer, I do (firmly tongue in cheek) take great offence.

Is this simply the to and fro of political point-scoring or is this the fruit of which the gospels speak? The rottenness of an individual seeping out through political pores. And, if so, should the branch be pruned – and let's be clear – electorally, not in any more dramatic sense? Or are we experiencing a new Puritanism whereby we want our politicians to have convictions, to be passionate, to be authentic human beings, and then when they exhibit those all-too human flaws, we cry foul? The significance of this is that we will be going to the elections on Thursday – local councillors in County Durham, a new Member of Parliament in Hartlepool and here in Durham a referendum on the neighbourhood plan. So it's a fair and timely question to ask. At one level, the question about a politicians elasticity with truth seems absurd.

We are emerging from a global pandemic. Some 130,000 of our fellow citizens have died as a result of the virus. The economy has experienced the greatest shock of the past century or more. Our school children, college and university students have had their education disrupted to an unimaginable extent. Nursing home residents have not gone outside for a year or more. And what is dominating the political agenda? Who paid for the redecoration..? At one level, then, there is an element of absurdity. But it perhaps the absurdity doesn't end there. It's not well known that the Prime Minister is paid about £150,000. That's a huge sum of money by most peoples' standards. About 6 times the average household income. And the thought that £30,000 was not enough to refurbish a flat seems to many to be obscene. But to give it some context. The Prime Minister's salary is roughly the same as that of the 7 most senior members of staff in Durham County Council; it is rather less than its chief executive, and roughly half the salary of Durham University's Vice Chancellor. Just pause to think about that. It's not that we don't reward public service. It's that we are prepared to pay our university leaders two or three times more than our politicians who have global responsibilities. The theory is that we don't incentivise people to go into politics for financial gain, we have a cultural bias against this because it is considered 'vocational'. So they are paid at a modest rate, but expected to have an infinite capacity to solve complex problems for which even experts made inadequate preparation. We expect something noble, but then are disappointed and exasperated when they don't live up to expectations. *Thus you will know them by their fruits.*

But there's something even more insidious going on. In England, full party political membership runs at roughly ½ million people. That's those who have paid their subs and fully signed up. Roughly 1% of the adult population is actively engaged in politics. This figure has been in almost continuous decline since the 1950's when closer to 10% of adults were party members. I guess the point I'm trying to get across is that we as a population have withdrawn almost completely from politics – in much the same way as organised religion has been abandoned. We – collectively – have walked away, ceased to participate and that has serious consequences. It's much easier, of course, to shout from

the side-lines, pointing out what any fool ought to know. But for those who actually venture onto the pitch, they know only too well that this is not for the faint-hearted. *He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit.*

So the irony is that we might have started out this morning hearing the Gospel text and applying it to the Prime Minister or to our politicians with a knowing smile. But scripture has a way of turning the world upside down. That's very biblical. What if we were to say '*you will know us by our fruits*'. And what are our fruits? Well it's something we know well in church. We all know who the Vicar is, don't we? The word means 'the substitute'. The Vicar was there on behalf of someone else, the Bishop, the Patron, or to say prayers on behalf of the parish. Collectively, we are doing the same with our politicians; we are now expecting them to be 'the substitute' because we are absent, disengaged. We are not doing it ourselves. We want someone else to do the hard work of politics on our behalf. And just once in a while we have an opportunity to get involved, to make our mark. That will be this week on Thursday.

What I really want to say is that from my years in Westminster, the one thing I learnt is that, regardless of affiliation, politicians of every flavour are united in their desire to make a difference, to change things for the better, to leave the world a better place. I might wholeheartedly and viscerally disagree with their politics, but I honour their endeavour. I delight that we can hold them to account through the ballot box, but more than anything I salute them for answering their vocation, when so few of us are willing to stand up and be counted ourselves.

Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

A Form of Intercession

We pray for strength to follow Jesus.
Saviour, we hear your call.
Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Whoever wishes to be great among you
must be your servant.'

Saviour, we hear your call.
Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Unless you change
and become humble like little children,
you can never enter the kingdom of heaven.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Happy are the humble;
they will receive what God has promised.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Be merciful as your Father is merciful;
love your enemies and do good to them.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Love one another, as I love you;
there is no greater love than this,
to lay down your life for your friends.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Go to people everywhere
and make them my disciples,
and I will be with you always, to the end of time.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

Help us to follow.

God of mercy,
**you know us and love us
and hear our prayer:
keep us in the eternal fellowship of
Jesus Christ our Saviour.
Amen.**

Hymn

A brighter dawn is breaking,
And earth with praise is waking;
For thou, O King most highest,
The power of death defiest;

And thou hast come victorious,
With risen Body glorious,
Who now for ever livest,
And life abundant givest.

O free the world from blindness,
And fill the world with kindness,
Give sinners resurrection,
Bring striving to perfection;

In sickness give us healing,
In doubt thy clear revealing,
That praise to thee be given
In earth as in thy heaven.

Percy Dearmer

A Prayer of Edmund Spenser:

Most glorious Lord of life, that on this day,
Didst make thy triumph over death and sin:
And having harrow'd hell, didst bring away
Captivity thence captive, us to win:
This joyous day, dear Lord, with joy begin,
And grant that we for whom thou diddest die,
Being with thy dear blood clean wash'd from sin,
May live for ever in felicity.
And that thy love we weighing worthily,
May likewise love thee for the same again:

And for thy sake, that all like dear didst buy,
With love may one another entertain.
So let us love, dear love, like as we ought,
Love is the lesson which the Lord us taught.

Calendar of Holy Days

Tuesday 4 May
Saturday 8 May

English Saints and Martyrs of the Reformation Era
Julian of Norwich, Spiritual Writer, c 1417

“God, of thy goodness, give me thyself;
for thou art enough for me,
and I can ask for nothing less
that can be full honour to thee.
And if I ask anything that is less,
ever shall I be in want,
for only in thee have I all.”



Julian of Norwich

A Prayer for use during the Coronavirus outbreak

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

A Prayer of Miles Coverdale

Christ is now risen again
from his death and all his pain:
therefore will we merry be,
and rejoice with him gladly.

Alleluia.

Had he now risen again,
we had been lost, this is plain:
but since he is risen in deed,
let us love him all with speed.

Alleluia.

Now is a time of gladness,
to sing of the Lord's goodness:
therefore glad now will we be,
and rejoice in him only.

Alleluia. Amen.

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