



**DURHAM
CATHEDRAL**

THE SHRINE OF ST CUTHBERT

Praying Together

*during the week beginning Sunday 6 September
The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity*

During this time of great anxiety and uncertainty, we want to stay in touch with our regular worshippers and indeed with everyone who is associated with the Cathedral family. We are delighted that we have been able to reintroduce congregational worship here at the Cathedral and there is more information about that later on in this booklet. Durham Cathedral is also open for private prayer and quiet reflection.

If you'd like to come to the cathedral for worship and/or 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, if you can't re-join us yet, you will still be able to engage with us online.

Gospel

Matthew 18. 15-20

Jesus said, 'If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

Thought for the Day

by the Very Reverend Andrew Tremlett

It's often not the most obvious things which turn out to be the most important. The hidden signal, the understated remark, the unnoticed and un-trodden path in time reveals its own significance. Rather like that poem by Robert Frost, 'The road not taken':

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less travelled by
And that has made all the difference.

Tucked away in a corner of St Peter's Basilica in Rome, in the corridor that leads to the Sacristy, is a monument on a side wall. Not quite in a corridor, but certainly on the way to somewhere else. And the wall would be very familiar to any English visitor and certainly not out of place in an English parish church or Cathedral. On it is a list of the Vicars. But it won't surprise you to know that in the Basilica of St Peter in Rome the list of Vicars had a somewhat greater significance than even the list of Deans of a Cathedral. For the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, is often referred to as the Vicar of Christ, a term also used for bishops in their dioceses, but only of the Pope for the whole church. This 'Vicars' board began with St Peter, continued through Linus, Anacletus and Clement, and so on down the Christian centuries. Since I visited, Benedict XVI and Francis would have been added. It is a powerful, direct, concrete assertion of the unbroken tradition of apostolic authority; it is the laying-in-stone of what is hinted at in that verse: *whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven*. The very same words which Jesus had uttered to Simon Peter following his declaration of Jesus as the Messiah: *And I tell you, you are Peter,* and on this rock² I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16.18).*

But before getting to Peter and the Church in Rome, let's take a step back and look more closely at Matthew. Modern scholars argue that Matthew is written somewhat later than Mark, the earliest gospel. Matthew draws together the sayings, teachings and miracles of Jesus and presents them in a coherent way and speaks to an audience who had some understanding of the Tanakh, the Hebrew Scriptures, by grouping Jesus' teaching in five blocks resembling the Torah, the five books of Moses.

The fourth of these comes in Chapter 18, including today's gospel, and the chapter

deals with the life of the early Christian community. How do we know this? Well, the giveaway is the word 'Church' – the Greek word 'ekklesia' occurs only twice in the gospels, and they both come in these two passages: *upon this rock I will build my church* (16:18) & *if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church* (18:17).

So the words we have in Matthew are, as it were, spoken by the Risen Christ guiding the first Christians through their early days. The commentator, Francis Beare, puts it like this: *"It is the risen Christ who speaks to lay down rules and principles for his Church. They deal with issues and problems which arise in the life of an organised community, in which he is to be present, not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, wherever two or three are gathered in his name"*.

So what guidance is given to the Church? In the first instance, there is **an assumption that conflict will arise**. This may seem a strange assumption to make, but it shows the reality of community life. While the reality might be all too common, the Christian response was extraordinary – the assumption of free and gracious forgiveness: *'If another member of the church* sins against you,* go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one'*. This puts us very much in mind of St Paul in Galatians 6.1: *'My friends,* if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness'*. Only if it is not possible to resolve the situation should they then resort to the ekklesia, the church. What seems to be pictured is a collective gathering where both ruling and decision are made – and if that still does not bring about repentance and reconciliation, then *'if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector'*.

And the second point to note is what it says **about ecclesial authority structures today**. There is no doubt that the first Christians, Matthew included, would not have recognised the structures of authority which grew from these few verses, but as inheritors of both the Catholic and Reformed Western Christian traditions, Anglicans have a special duty in the exercise of authority.

More than anything, Anglicans will be sceptical of a rigid imposition which fails to take account of what God may be saying to us in our own generation. However, as the work of IASCUFO, the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity Faith and Order (on which Simon Oliver, the Canon Professor sits) demonstrates, this cannot be an excuse for *anything goes*. However, imperfect, the Anglican Communion does have a dispersed authority through the four instruments of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates Meeting, the Anglican Consultative Council and the

Lambeth Conference, which are all advised by the Faith and Order Commission. This common commitment to authority means that there will be boundaries which cross cultures, and call into question what is truly local and what is truly universal. This makes for hard choices and, at times, sacrifices which will put us at odds with wider society. But in doing so, God calls us his people, his church, his ecclesia to exhibit the compassionate and selfless love which marked out the life of Jesus: *'forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of Peace'* (Eph 4.1-3).

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.**

Calendar of Holy Days

Tuesday 8 September Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Wednesday 9 September Charles Fuge Lowder, priest, 1880

Lord Jesus, give to us the gift of pure worship –
that ability which Mary had
of attributing to you your truth worth,
your full value, your inestimable greatness.
Teach us to be reverent,
yet teach us how to express the love
that burns within our hearts
as we think of your goodness towards us –
that you have come to be our light in the darkness,
our hope in despair, our strength in weakness,
our shelter in the storm – our eternal Saviour.
Amen.

Hymn

Just as I am, without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within, and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea all I need, in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve:
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am (thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down),
Now to be thine, yea thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, of that free love
The breadth, length, depth and height to prove,
Here for a season then above,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Charlotte Elliott

Poem: The Slip by Wendell Berry (born 1934)

The American poet, novelist and environmentalist, Wendell Berry, describes a landslip where a river bank has given way and an acre of farmland is submerged in water. All is ruin and devastation and yet, as 'in the beginning', there is hope because new life and new possibilities drive us on both in our search for survival and in our search for God. The poem can also be read at other levels, not least in relation to climate change and human destruction of God's creation.

The river takes the land, and leaves nothing.
Where the great slip gave way in the bank
and an acre disappeared, all human plans
dissolve. An awful clarification occurs
where a place was. Its memory breaks
from what is known now, begins to drift.
Where cattle grazed and trees stood, emptiness
widens the air for birdflight, wind, and rain.
As before the beginning, nothing is there.
Human wrong is in the cause, human
ruin in the effect—but no matter;
all will be lost, no matter the reason.
Nothing, having arrived, will stay.
The earth, even, is like a flower, so soon
passeth it away. And yet this nothing
is the seed of all—the clear eye
of Heaven, where all the worlds appear.
Where the imperfect has departed, the perfect
begins its struggle to return. The good gift
begins again its descent. The maker moves
in the unmade, stirring the water until
it clouds, dark beneath the surface,
stirring and darkening the soul until pain
perceives new possibility. There is nothing
to do but learn and wait, return to work
on what remains. Seed will sprout in the scar.
Though death is in the healing, it will heal.

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 John Cosin

Be thou a light unto my eyes,
music to mine ears, sweetness to my taste,
and full contentment to my heart.
Be thou my sunshine in the day,
my food at table, my repose in the night,
my clothing in nakedness,
and my succour in all necessities.
Lord Jesus, I give thee my body, my soul,
my substance, my fame, my friends,
my liberty, and my life.
Dispose of me and all that is mine
as it may seem best to thee
and to the glory of thy blessed name.
Amen.

Contact details for The Reverend Canon Michael Everitt

Address: 15 The College, Durham, DH1 3EQ
Email: michael.everitt@durhamcathedral.co.uk
Telephone: 0191 384 0164

The next issue of *Praying Together*
will be published on Monday 14 September