



**DURHAM
CATHEDRAL**

THE SHRINE OF ST CUTHBERT

Praying Together

*during the week beginning Sunday 11 October
The Eighteenth 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 22. 1-14

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, "Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet." But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, maltreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, "The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet." Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot, and throw

him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” For many are called, but few are chosen.’

Thought for the Day

by the Reverend Canon Professor Simon Oliver

One thing I have missed most during this year’s lockdowns is sharing meals with friends and extended family. In the summer, we managed just two or three gatherings in our house and made three or four visits to friends. Occasionally it’s been cheese and wine on Zoom, which is a pretty poor substitute. Sharing a meal is a culturally universal way in which we express friendship and communion – everything from the daily family meal to the wedding breakfast, the birthday celebration, the college feast, Christmas dinner, the occasional dinner party, and so on. Whilst this is culturally universal, for the world’s religions food is particularly significant. Food is not like the fuel we put in the car; it’s not just about keeping our bodies functioning. Food has meaning because, for Jews and Christians, it is God’s first gift to creatures. In the Genesis saga of creation, having created plants, animals, man and woman, on the sixth day God says, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” This is part of what we call divine providence – God providing for creation by first providing food which sustains life, that creation might share God’s life. Life, and food to sustain life, are God’s first gifts.

It’s hardly surprising, therefore, that food plays such an important and symbolic role in the scriptures, including the gospels. Jesus eats with his disciples, he eats with sinners, he shares the Passover. After the resurrection, he makes himself known at a meal with two people journeying to Emmaus and he shares a breakfast of fish and bread with his disciples on the shores of Lake Tiberias. At the Passover on the night of his betrayal he gives his disciples a meal at which he will be remembered and through which he will be present, a meal in which he shares his life, his body and blood: the Eucharist. The great Dominican theologian Herbert McCabe was once asked by a student why we couldn’t celebrate the Eucharist with a Big Mac and coke. “Because, my dear boy”, came the reply “the Eucharist is about the meaning of food, and Big Macs and coke are not food.” I couldn’t agree more. The Eucharist is about the meaning of food in the sense that it is about sharing the life of God in Christ; it is about communion and therefore friendship with God and each other. In the most

simply act of sharing a tiny piece of unleavened bread, gathered from the grain on the hillside and prayed over on the altar, we are taught to be Eucharistic, literally 'thankful' – thankful for life, thankful for one another, and thankful for the food that delights and sustains life.

Jesus teaches about the significance of food when he likens the Kingdom of Heaven to a great wedding banquet. In this morning's gospel, he tells the parable of a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. The king sends out invitations, then sends his slaves with a message to come because the food is ready. The response of the invitees varies: some are indifferent whilst others are violent and kill the king's slaves. The king is enraged, burns the city and declares those first invited to be unworthy. So he invites everyone, both good and bad. The wedding hall was full of guests. The traditional interpretation of this parable is this: the king is God and the wedding banquet is the feast of the kingdom for Christ, the Son of God, at the end of time. Those first invited, the Israelites, respond in different ways, some violently by killing the prophets, others indifferently. So the invitation into the kingdom of heaven is extended to all people. Some who come to the banquet are good, some bad. This is the Church, the body of Christ, which is a mixture of saints and sinners.

I'd like to focus on the striking end of the parable. The king came to visit the guests and noticed a man who was not dressed properly. He was not wearing a wedding robe. The king had him bound and thrown out. What's going on here? It's something like this. Christ came for all people and the guest list for the feast in the kingdom of heaven includes everyone – saints and sinners alike. Come and share the food of the kingdom, the life of God! But how we prepare ourselves and how we receive that gift are not a matter of indifference. How we clothe ourselves, if you like, when we come to Christ's table is of the greatest importance. We are to clothe ourselves in the virtues of the kingdom. This is precisely what St. Paul writes about to the Christians in Philippi, the passage we heard in our first lesson. He writes: "Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you." We are to clothe ourselves in what is honourable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable: these things should be our wedding robe as we come to the feast of Christ. We are invited, but how we receive the food of the kingdom and the life of God is of the utmost importance. Above all, I think, we have to come clothed in thankfulness. That's Paul's constant refrain in his letters: be thankful. When we are thankful for God's gifts, when we are thankful for his first gift of food in creation,

when we are thankful for the Eucharist and look forward to the wedding banquet of the kingdom at the end of time, we can receive God's life fully and rightly. When we prepare ourselves for this and every Eucharist, when we are thankful for our daily bread and all that sustains life, we begin to clothe ourselves with the robes of the kingdom for the wedding feast of Christ, the Lamb of God. When we live thankfully, we can begin to build a world in which people do not starve, in which people are not forced to foodbanks, in which people do not eat alone; a world in which food is not reduced simply to fuel for the body, but becomes the gift of God for the celebration of life, free of fear and injustice. Come to this altar this morning clothed in the robe of thankfulness, bearing your hopes and fears, to receive the Eucharist the bread of life. Let St. Paul's words settle in your heart at this banquet: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

A Form of Intercession

Blessed are you, eternal God,
to be praised and glorified for ever.

Hear us as we pray for your holy catholic Church:
make us all one, that the world may believe.

Grant that every member of the Church
may truly and humbly serve you:
that the life of Christ may be revealed in us.

Strengthen all who minister in Christ's name:
give them courage to proclaim your Gospel.

Inspire and lead those who hold authority
in the nations of the world:
guide them in the ways of justice and peace.

Make us alive to the needs of our community:
help us to share each other's joys and burdens.

Look with kindness on our homes and families:
grant that your love may grow in our hearts.

Deepen our compassion for all who suffer from sickness,
grief or trouble:
in your presence may they find their strength.

We remember those who have died:
Father, into your hands we commend them.

We praise you for all your saints who have entered
your eternal glory:
bring us all to share in your heavenly kingdom.

Calendar of Holy Days

Monday 12 October	Wilfrid, bishop, missionary, 709 <i>Elizabeth Fry, prison reformer, 1845</i> <i>Edith Cavell, nurse, 1915</i>
Tuesday 13 October	Edward the Confessor, king, 1066
Thursday 15 October	Teresa of Avila, teacher of the faith, 1582
<i>Friday 16 October</i>	<i>Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer, bishops, martyrs, 1555</i>
Saturday 17 October	Ignatius, bishop, martyr, c 107 <i>Eve of Luke the Evangelist</i>

Hymn

All my hope on God is founded;
He doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
Only good and only true.
God unknown
He alone
Calls my heart to be his own.

Pride of man and earthly glory,
Sword and crown betray his trust;
What with care and toil he buildeth,
Tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power,
Hour by hour,
Is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
Deep his wisdom, passing thought:
Splendour, light and life attend him,
Beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
From his store
New-born worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth th'Almighty giver
Bounteous gifts on us bestow;
His desire our soul delighteth,
Pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
At his hand;
Joy doth wait on his command.

Still from man to God eternal
Sacrifice of praise be done,
High above all praises praising
For the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call
One and all:
Ye who follow shall not fall.

*Robert Bridges,
based on the German of J Neander*

Poem: Anthem by W H Auden (1907-1974)

W H Auden's anthem is a hymn to the unity of creation—each aspect of God's creation a separate and separable thing but whose coherence draws all things together to praise their maker. There are echoes of St Paul's teaching of the various members of the body making up the whole and each needing the other to function in its true state. So, with creation, each component appears unique and yet each lends itself to the other and enhances life. We might learn from this for the benefit of creation when we remember that to damage one part of God's creation is to damage the whole: a lesson which climate change suggests we have not learnt.

Let us praise our Maker, with true passion extol Him.
Let the whole creation give out another sweetness,
Nicer in our nostrils, a novel fragrance
From cleansed occasions in accord together
As one feeling fabric, all flushed and intact
Phenomena and numbers announcing in one
Multitudinous ecumenical song
Their grand givenness of gratitude and joy,
Peaceable and plural, their positive truth
An authoritative This, an unthreatened Now
When in love and in laughter, each lives himself,
For united by His word cognition and power
System and order are a single glory
And the pattern is complex, their places safe.

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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 for Creation

Show us, O God,
how to love not only animals, birds,
and all green and growing things,
but the soil, air and water by which we live,
so that we may not exploit or pollute them
for our own profit or convenience.
Help us to cherish these necessities for our survival;
and guide those in authority to ensure
that the human spirit may not be starved
in pursuit of material comfort and wealth.
For Jesus Christ's sake.
Amen.

The next issue of *Praying Together*
will be published on Monday 19 October