



DURHAM CATHEDRAL

THE SHRINE OF ST CUTHBERT

Praying Together

*during the week beginning Sunday 19 April:
The Second Sunday of Easter*

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.

This is particularly important to us at a time when, following the Church of England's instructions, public worship at the Cathedral has been suspended. The residential clergy are still saying the Daily Offices at home and they are being live-streamed via the cathedral website where there is a link that takes you to the Cathedral's Facebook page (you don't need a Facebook account).

We hope that this pamphlet will provide you with important worship and prayer resources for use at home as well as a reminder of how to keep in touch with us, especially if you have particularly needs. Please be assured that you are firmly in our thoughts and prayers, and please pray for us at this very difficult and worrying time.

Gospel

John 20. 19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Thought for the Day

by The Reverend Canon Professor Simon Oliver

In so many ways, the story of Jesus' trial, crucifixion, death and resurrection is the story of the greatest human hopes and expectations being raised, reduced to ruins, and rebuilt. Let's start with Palm Sunday which we celebrated two weeks' ago. As Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, what were people's hopes and expectations? In Jesus' time, Israel was brutally occupied by the Romans. Like any group of oppressed people, the Jews were hoping for a political or military leader who would provoke a rebellion and defeat the occupiers. Was Jesus the leader they were looking for, this Messiah? This is what the people of Jerusalem were expecting when Jesus rode into the city on the back of a donkey. This man of God who healed the sick, calmed the storms of Galilee and taught with such authority and power, would surely confront the Romans and put an end to the corruption that had infected the Jewish religious elite and their Temple in Jerusalem.

Such were the very high hopes and expectations of Palm Sunday. By the end of the week, those expectations were in ruins. The crowds that had hailed Jesus with such momentous expectation a few days before now turned on him and call for his torture and execution. Jesus becomes the focus of fear, frustration, anger, disappointment, dashed hopes and expectations.

At Jesus' death and burial, his followers flee in fear. All is lost. After the Sabbath rest, one of the women who had been so captivated by Jesus' teaching goes to his tomb to tend a dead body. Now Mary's expectations are of the lowest and most desperate kind. When Mary's hopes and expectations are reduced to nothing but anointing a

corpse and the disciples are reduced to hiding from religious tyrants, when death surrounds them, they encounter something extraordinary: Jesus, whom they had followed for three years or so, finds them and greets them in a way they barely recognise. 'Peace be with you', says Jesus to the disciples in the locked room in this morning's gospel. It's only when the disciples' hopes and expectations are reduced to nothing, when they die to all their fantasies about what Jesus should do and what God must be like, when all those illusions are gone and death has done its worst, only then is there space for a new call and a new, wholly unexpected life – the resurrection of Jesus and the greeting of peace. Today, we arrive at the extraordinary testimony of Thomas the Apostle: 'My Lord and my God!' When all his expectations, fantasies and demands for evidence have been laid aside, he sees.

When every hope and expectation has been released and extinguished, when death has done its worst, there is only God who is the creator of all things and whose life is eternal. Even Jesus himself had to let go of every expectation on the cross, even the desire that God would spare him. He hands himself to God the Father completely and what is returned is not resuscitation. What is returned is not the spirit of Jesus living on in his disciples. What is returned is something barely imaginable: a new creation and the resurrection of the whole Christ, body and soul, human and divine, to new life. Death has an answer: life, the life of the risen Jesus to which we, the Church, bear witness every day, the life into which he calls us.

Over the last few weeks extraordinary weeks, many of our expectations of life, many of the things we count as normal and dependable, have been laid aside because of the pandemic. We've feared the worst and heard tragic stories of human suffering and heartbreak because of coronavirus. We've heard stories of remarkable human grace, generosity and courage. We don't really know what to expect in the future and no one quite knows when life will get back to normal, or indeed what normal will be like. For many of us, there's great fear about jobs, health and well-being. Fear amidst confusion and uncertainty, when expectations are confounded and hopes are fragile or destroyed, is exactly the human situation into which Jesus Christ is resurrected to new life. He stands before us and says 'this is what God is like: forgiveness, love, light and life.' Amidst all the changes and chances of this fleeting world, as the ancient prayer puts it, when death does its worst and all our expectations and fantasies about ourselves and God are brought to nothing, God in Jesus Christ finds us behind the locked door of our hearts and says 'peace be with you'. He comes with a life and peace we can barely imagine – the mysterious heart of God and the heart of reality.

Prayers of Intercession

In joy and hope let us pray to the Father.

That our risen Saviour may fill us with the joy
of his glorious and life-giving resurrection
to deepen our faith and strengthen our hope
in the community at Durham Cathedral and in our local churches,

we pray to the Father.

Hear our prayer.

That isolated and persecuted churches
may find fresh strength in the good news of Easter
especially in places currently overlooked in the current health crisis:
Syria and Iraq,

we pray to the Father.

Hear our prayer.

That God may grant us humility
to be subject to one another in Christian love,
showing that love in our care and concern for each other
in lock down and in the move against the coronavirus,

we pray to the Father.

Hear our prayer.

That he may provide for those who lack food, work or shelter
especially through the work of Durham Foodbank and homeless charities,

we pray to the Father.

Hear our prayer.

That by his power war and famine may cease through all the world
through the work of government and aid agencies,
of diplomacy and neighbourly love,

we pray to the Father.

Hear our prayer.

That he may reveal the light of his presence to the sick,
the weak and the dying,
to comfort and strengthen them, especially those whom we name here,

we pray to the Father.

Hear our prayer.

That, according to his promises,
all who have died in the faith of the resurrection
may be raised on the last day,
especially any whom we know who have died recently
whom we name before the Lord,

we pray to the Father.

Hear our prayer.

That he may send the fire of the Holy Spirit upon his people,
so that we may bear faithful witness to his resurrection,

we pray to the Father.

Hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father,
you have delivered us from the power of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
grant that, as his death has recalled us to life,
so his continual presence in us may raise us to eternal joy;
through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

An Easter Hymn

Come, ye faithful, raise the anthem,
Cleave the skies with shouts of praise;
Sing to him who found the ransom,
Ancient of eternal days,
God eternal, Word incarnate,
Whom the heaven of heaven obeys.

Ere he raised the lofty mountains,
Formed the sea, or built the sky,
Love eternal, free, and boundless,
Forced the Lord of life to die,
Lifted up the Prince of princes
On the throne of Calvary.

Now on those eternal mountains
Stands the sapphire throne, all bright,
With the ceaseless alleluyas
Which they raise, the sons of light;
Sion's people tell his praises,
Victor after hard-won fight.

Bring your harps, and bring your incense,
Sweep the string and pour the lay;
Let the earth proclaim his wonders,
King of that celestial day;
He the Lamb once slain is worthy,
Who was dead, and lives for ay.

Laud and honour to the Father,
Laud and honour to the Son,
Laud and honour to the Spirit,
Ever Three and ever One,
One in love, and One in splendour,
While unending ages run. Amen.

Job Hupton and J M Neale

Redemption: George Herbert (1593-1633)

George Herbert's poem speaks of our search for what St Paul calls 'newness of life' with God but the journey we take often misses the point of the Gospel and its direction to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness—and the simple needs of life will follow. Real treasure is where our heart should be—amongst the poor and the needy, the lonely and the unloved. At the foot of the cross.

Having been tenant long to a rich Lord,
Not thriving, I resolved to be bold,
And make a suit unto him, to afford
A new small-rented lease, and cancell th' old.
In heaven at his manour I him sought:
They told me there, that he was lately gone
About some land, which he had dearly bought
Long since on earth, to take possession.
I straight return'd, and knowing his great birth,
Sought him accordingly in great resorts;
In cities, theatres, gardens, parks, and courts:
At length I heard a ragged noise and mirth
Of theeves and murderers: there I him espied,
Who straight, *Your suit is granted*, said, & died.

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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.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who are in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

A Prayer of St John Chrysostom

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests; Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. Amen.

The next issue of *Praying Together*
will be published on Monday 27 April