



**DURHAM  
CATHEDRAL**

THE SHRINE OF ST CUTHBERT

# Praying Together

*during the week beginning Sunday 23 August*

*The Eleventh 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](http://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 16. 13-20**

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I 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.' Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

# Thought for the Day

by the Reverend Canon Michael Everitt

There are not many theological jokes, despite G K Chesterton's in "All things Considered" 1908 writing that, "It is the test of a good religion whether you can joke about it."

There is one that fits today's gospel reading, that like all classic jokes has a few variations. With apologies to the Canon Theologian. "Jesus turned to the theologians and said unto them, "And whom do you say that I am?" They replied, "You are the eschatological manifestation of the ground of our being, the ontological foundation of the context of our very selfhood revealed." And Jesus replied unto them, "What?"

In the conversation at Caesarea Philippi in our gospel reading there are many R's in play. Reportage, reflection, revelation, reaction, result and resolution. (It continues after the reading with Resistance rejection and restoration, but those are for another day.)

How we talk about any person or situation involves a number of dynamics. Whilst as I child we might well be guided by our emotional response, as we are shaped and educated in life, this becomes nuanced with other information. Thus, to walk into this building, our emotional response, is one of exhilaration, our more nuanced response is to note the architecture and its history.

Jesus asked the disciples to tell him who others said the Son of man was. This a request for a report, not personal thoughts or feelings. They duly respond, 'Some say this, others say something other. There is no engagement with their report, simply a collection of second-hand opinions. (The challenge to us, is whether this is how we respond to the same question.)

Jesus then makes it clear that reportage is not sufficient. He wants to know what the disciples would say. You can almost hear the silence. This has moved into a personal engagement, which requires an honesty that carries a risk. Will the response be one that helps build the relationship, or cause problems?

Hence Jesus's affirmation to Simon Son of Jonah, the rock of the disciples, for answering and for being inspired in his answer, "You are the Christ the Son of the Living God." Simon Peter's reply is not dependent on his or anyone's views or

opinions, it is a declaration of a revealed truth that relies on nothing other than who Jesus is.

Jesus then goes on to commission Simon Peter into a whole new role. One on which much has been made. Knowing who Jesus is, does not allow a neutrality in life, the ramifications are immediate and long lasting. To recognise the uniqueness of Jesus is to participate in understanding the world through a divine perspective. Keys to unlock or shut down whole areas of life come into possession.

We need to ensure that we do not simply give second hand answers, borrowing others opinions or language; living out second-hand lives that are not authentically ours. We need to have the courage, and the inspiration to answer Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" honestly and personally.

Having responded, Jesus replies in a similar way back to us. Initially the historical definition (Simon, son of Jonah) and then with a new commission (You are Peter) that carries a new role (on this rock I will build my church) and responsibilities (I give you the keys).

These responsibilities are not superficial, nor reliant on others. It is an adult commission to take responsibility for our words and actions. (Whatever you bind or loose on earth, is bound or loosed in heaven.) We can no longer retreat to Adam's excuse, "She gave me," or Eve's, "The serpent tricked me."

We are raised into a new relationship that makes it personal between us and God and will affect everything. We are given authority and responsibilities by realising who Jesus is, and therefore how we need to be. No longer defined by other human beings, but by God, adopted as his daughters and sons.

So, who do we say Jesus is?

Who does Jesus say that we are?

And how have our lives now been changed? .

# A Form of Intercession

Let us pray to God, our heavenly Father.

Father of all  
**hear your children's prayer.**

Sovereign Lord,  
your Son has revealed you as our heavenly Father,  
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

Father of all  
**hear your children's prayer.**

You have made your Church a spiritual family,  
a household of faith.  
Through baptism we are reborn  
as the brothers and sisters of Christ.  
Deepen our unity and fellowship in him.

Father of all  
**hear your children's prayer.**

You sent your Son to give his life  
as a ransom for the whole human family.  
Give justice, peace and racial harmony  
to the world he died to save.

Father of all  
**hear your children's prayer.**

You gave your Son a share in the life of a family in Nazareth.  
Help us to value our families, to be thankful for them,  
and to live sensitively within them.

Father of all  
**hear your children's prayer.**

Your Son drew around him a company of friends.  
Bring love and joy to all who are alone.  
Help us all to find in the brothers and sisters of Christ  
a loving family.

Father of all  
**hear your children's prayer.**

You are the God of the dead as well as of the living.

In confidence we remember those of the household  
of faith who have gone before us.  
Bring us with them to the joy of your home in heaven.

Father of all  
**hear your children's prayer.**

## Calendar of Holy Days

**Monday 24 August    Bartholomew the Apostle**

Almighty and everlasting God,  
who gave to your apostle Bartholomew grace truly to believe and  
to preach your word:  
grant that your Church  
may love that word which he believed  
and may faithfully preach and receive the same;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

Thursday 27 August	Monica, mother of Augustine of Hippo, 387
Friday 28 August	Augustine, bishop, teacher of the faith, 430
Saturday 29 August	Beheading of John the Baptist

# Hymn

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here;  
Come, bow before him now, with reverence and fear.  
In him no sin is found, we stand on holy ground.  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;  
He burns with holy fire, with splendour he is crowned.  
How awesome is the sight, our radiant King of Light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place,  
He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister his grace,  
No work too hard for him, in faith receive from him;  
Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

*David J Evans*

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# Poem: The Annunciation by Edwin Muir (1887-1959)

Edwin Muir is brilliant at describing a divine moment in time set against the backdrop of ordinary humanity going about its business. In this poem, Muir brings to life the countless depictions in art of the moment when the Angel Gabriel told Mary she would be the mother of Our Lord and she conceived. Outside, life goes on (rather like it does when you stand in an art gallery looking through the Renaissance eye at the same scene) ; inside, our redemption is inaugurated.

The angel and the girl are met.  
Earth was the only meeting place.  
For the embodied never yet  
Travelled beyond the shore of space.

The eternal spirits in freedom go.  
See, they have come together, see,  
While the destroying minutes flow,  
Each reflects the other's face  
Till heaven in hers and earth in his  
Shine steady there. He's come to her  
From far beyond the farthest star,  
Feathered through time. Immediacy  
Of strangest strangeness is the bliss  
That from their limbs all movement takes.  
Yet the increasing rapture brings  
So great a wonder that it makes  
Each feather tremble on his wings.

Outside the window footsteps fall  
Into the ordinary day  
And with the sun along the wall  
Pursue their unreturning way.  
Sound's perpetual roundabout  
Rolls its numbered octaves out  
And hoarsely grinds its battered tune.

But through the endless afternoon  
These neither speak nor movement make,  
But stare into their deepening trance  
As if their gaze would never break.

## 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 the Nation

Father in heaven, we give thank for life,  
and the experience life brings us.  
We thank you for our joys, sorrows, trials,  
failures, and triumphs.  
Above all we thank you for the hope we have in Christ  
that we shall find fulfilment in him.  
We praise you for our country, its beauty,  
the riches it has for us and the gifts it showers on us.  
We thank you for your peoples,  
the gift of languages we speak,  
the variety of races we have,  
the cultural heritage we cherish  
and the latent possibilities there are for our country.  
Grant that we accept these gifts with thankfulness,  
and use them for the good of the human race  
and to bring glory to you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

The next issue of *Praying Together*  
will be published on Monday 31 August