



**DURHAM
CATHEDRAL**

THE SHRINE OF ST CUTHBERT

Praying Together

*during the week beginning Sunday 30 August
The Twelfth 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 16. 21-end

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.' Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? 'For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.'

Thought for the Day

by the Reverend Canon Michael Hampel

Peter the Apostle has just been charged by Jesus with the task of keeping the Church true to its mission. He is to be the rock on which Jesus will build his Church. Whether Jesus envisaged Peter as the first Bishop of Rome or Pope and therefore the first in a long line of a very particular kind of Church leadership is debateable. What is beyond doubt is that Jesus did not intend Peter to be the Church's first spin doctor.

And yet a good deal of spin characterises the beginning of today's gospel lesson as Peter sets his mind on human things and not divine things, on a good outcome and an avoidance of bad news, on positive thinking rather than heavy hearts.

Peter's expectation of a Messiah involves a victory very different from that of the resurrection which is not what he is expecting at all. There's still time, it seems, for Peter the civil servant to advise Jesus the politician that Israel can be freed from its enemies without the need for submission to a cross. Like Adam and Eve, Peter thinks that he knows better than God: a mistake which the Church, founded on the rock of Peter, has made countless times down the ages. Peter's new-found authority has gone to his head and he envisages God's enemies being routed by Jesus's divinity – perhaps in some apocalyptic throwing around of weight which would have the critics silenced and the wicked running for cover.

Sounds good to me. After all, that's how we usually fight our wars. But, then, that's because we, like Peter, think we know better than God. Peter's failure is his inability to recognise that it is Jesus's humanity which is his divinity. And, if that's true, it will be his humanity which will rout his enemies. And, because humanity cannot be extrapolated from mortality, death will raise its ugly head – inevitably.

Now, we don't necessarily share Peter's failure. If we understand anything of the words of scripture and the narrative of our liturgy, we know that it is Jesus's humanity which is his divinity. We express that understanding time and again in our hymns and prayers and acclamations. But, before we think that that lets us off the hook, we have to confess that we are still guilty of a sort of related-failure. Our failure is that we make little or no connection between our recognition of the divinity of Jesus's humanity and our daily lives and the life of the Church and the world.

After all, the history of the Church and the world is, as David Jenkins one put it, the story of one bloody mess after another. Mainly because we seem incapable of realising that the

throwing around of weight in order to achieve success is doomed to failure. It may lead to the short-term flowering of seed but that seed will very definitely be lying on shallow ground. Getting our own way, making a quick buck, silencing our critics, routing the enemy – if it's achieved by the throwing around of weight by arrogant people sitting on moral high ground – will be short-term sweetness leading to long-term bitterness.

Jesus knew that and he exemplified a very different approach: one which we admire but don't emulate very effectively. In other words, we survey the wondrous cross but I'm not convinced that we nevertheless count our richest gain as loss or pour contempt on all our pride. It's tough stuff and a few minutes at the lectern in Durham Cathedral isn't going to change much but it would be unfair of me to heap burning coals on our heads without looking for some way out of the conundrum. After all, we must try to live the Gospel however pessimistic we are about our ability to get it right. Trying is better than nothing: thank God – or we'd all give up before we started.

People are the problem really, aren't they? I have great difficulty with crashing bores and with people who cough very loudly but I dread to think how much my own foibles wear down the people around me. We often draw up job descriptions when we have vacancies here at the Cathedral and, when we do it, you'd think we were looking to appoint the odd saint or two, given the level of perfection we seem to be looking for! What we end up with, of course, are human beings with all the pros and cons that go with common humanity. But, remember, it was Jesus's humanity which was his divinity and, while we will always be more Peter than Jesus, we mustn't forget that when it comes to taking up our cross and following him.

The passage from St Paul's letter to the Romans, which was our first lesson this morning, is quite simply brilliant when it comes to talk of mission statements and job descriptions and I know that, when we read it, we might think: well, yes, very good but it takes two to tango – but someone's got to make the first move. I reckon Paul thinks the same actually. I love the way he throws in that line from the Book of Proverbs about heaping burning coals on their heads. It's as if he's trying to make the awkward business of loving one's enemies slightly more palatable by reminding us how thoroughly uncomfortable we can make rotters feel by being nice to them. But, more seriously though: that is the only way we will ever be able to take up our cross and live something of Jesus's divine humanity.

Here's an echo of it in words of eighteenth century poet Alexander Pope: 'Ah ne'er so dire a Thirst of Glory boast/Nor in the Critick let the Man be lost/Good-Nature and Good-Sense must ever join;/To err is human to forgive divine.'

A Form of Intercession

Let us pray to God,
that he will bring to fruition all that he desires
for his creation.

Father, Lord of creation,
in your mercy, hear us.

You have created the universe by your eternal Word,
and have blessed humankind in making us
stewards of the earth.

We pray for your world,
that we may share and conserve its resources,
and live in reverence for the creation
and in harmony with one another.

Father, Lord of creation,
in your mercy, hear us.

You have given the human race a rich land,
a land of streams and springs,
wheat and barley,
vines and oil and honey.

We have made by sin a world of suffering and sorrow.
We pray for those who bear the weight of affliction,
that they may come to share the life of wholeness and plenty.

Father, Lord of creation,
in your mercy, hear us.

In Christ you call us to a new way of life,
loving our neighbours before ourselves.
Help us to treat with care and respect the world as it is
as we live in hope and anticipation of the world
as it will be when your kingdom comes
and your will is done.

Thank you for those, living and departed,
who have shown a true respect for your creation.
Help us to follow in their footsteps,
until, with them, we see you face to face,
where all is made new in Christ our Lord.

Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Calendar of Holy Days

Monday 31 August Aidan, bishop, missionary, 651

Everlasting God,
you sent the gentle bishop Aidan
to proclaim the Gospel in this land:
grant us to live as he taught
in simplicity, humility, and love for the poor;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

<i>Tuesday 1 September</i>	<i>Giles, hermit, c 710</i>
<i>Wednesday 2 September</i>	<i>Martyrs of Papua New Guinea, 1901, 1942</i>
<i>Thursday 3 September</i>	<i>Gregory the Great, bishop, teacher of the faith, 604</i>
<i>Friday 4 September</i>	<i>Birinius, bishop, 650</i>

Aidan, Bishop of Lindisfarne

In 634 AD, a year after the death in battle of King Oswald's father Edwin, Oswald himself prepared to fight Cadwalla at Heavenfield near Hexham. Following what was said to be a miraculous victory, the new king sent for a missionary to come to Northumbria from Columba's monastery on Iona, which had been Oswald's own place of exile, sanctuary and education. The first missionary who came preached earnestly, but found the Northumbrians 'an ungovernable people, of obstinate and barbarous temperament' and returned downhearted to Iona.

As the community discussed the failure of the mission, a young Irish monk named Aidan suggested that a gentler approach might have been more successful. Aidan was duly consecrated bishop and sent to the court of King Oswald at Bamburgh. Oswald gave him Lindisfarne – a tidal island said to be in some ways reminiscent of Iona – as a base for his community and mission, and for a while accompanied him on missionary journeys, acting as his translator.

Bede describes Aidan's profound piety and humility; he was a man who mixed with kings and beggars. At an Easter feast in Oswald's court he broke up one of the King's silver plates in order to give it to the poor. Later, he gave away a fine horse which had been a gift from King Oswin saying that a poor man needed it more than him, and besides, riding on a great horse would separate him from his people.

Aidan must also have been both a shrewd and inspiring leader. As the monastery on Holy Island grew, missionary journeys and the foundation of new monasteries by Aidan's pupils reached far into distant Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Chad is remembered in Lichfield, Cedd in Essex and Wilfrid (among other places) in Sussex.

Aidan was undoubtedly the Apostle to the Northumbrians, but more than that, he and his pupils brought the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ to extensive areas of what we now call England. The medieval monks at Durham Cathedral regarded him as their first bishop and founder of the community which had eventually settled in Durham in 995 AD, and which had built a church to honour their most precious earthly possession – the relics of Aidan's successor, Cuthbert.

Hymn

Ye holy angels bright,
Who wait at God's right hand,
Or through the realms of light
Fly at your Lord's command,
Assist our song,
For else the theme
Too high doth seem
For mortal tongue.

Ye blessèd souls at rest,
Who ran this earthly race,
And now, from sin released,
Behold the Saviour's face,
God's praises sound,
As in his sight
With sweet delight
Ye do abound.

Ye saints, who toil below,
Adore your heavenly King,
And onward as ye go
Some joyful anthem sing;
Take what he gives
And praise him still,
Through good or ill,
Who ever lives!

My soul, bear thou thy part,
Triumph in God above:
And with a well-tuned heart
Sing thou the songs of love!
Let all thy days
Till life shall end,
What'er he send,
Be filled with praise.

Richard Baxter and others

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 St Aidan:

Leave me alone with God as much as may be.
As the tide draws the waters close in upon the shore,
Make me an island, set apart,
Alone with you, God, holy to you.
Then with the turning of the tide
Prepare me to carry your presence
to the busy world beyond,
The world that rushes in on me,
Till the waters come again and fold me back to you.
Amen.

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The next issue of *Praying Together*
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