

BLESSING

May our lord Jesus Christ who suffered for each one of us
And God the father who loves us and
The Holy Spirit who through grace gives us unfailing courage
Give you firm hope, encouragement and strength
God bless you and keep you today and always. Amen

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Canon Ken, Bishop-elect George, Joyce, Eddie, Johnny,
Adam & Hayley, Norman, Audra, Sylvia, Adam

Senior members resident in care homes

Nan, Isabel, Leslie, Lillian, Tom, Sally, Kay



**Remember all who have been bereaved especially during
this time when restrictions prevent the usual funeral services.**

The Wade family following the death of Ronnie, formerly of Hemsworth
Court Nursing Home, Shankill Road.

We continue to hold the Adair and Hill families in our prayers at this time
following the death of Liz's husband Bobby and then her brother Brian.
Pray for Liz and Pauline as they come to terms with the loss of their
husbands, that they and their families will know God's comfort and peace.

PARISH PRAYER LINE – TEL: 07553404711 (New)

*Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. Psalm 37:4,5*

*Canon Ken and I are doing our best to keep in touch and provide
resources during this time of separation. Please contact us for a chat
and/or a prayer. We would love to hear from you.*

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St Aidan's Parish Church

Enabling people to find a Living Faith in a Loving God by "Serving Christ in the Community"

17 May 2020 – Sixth Sunday of Easter

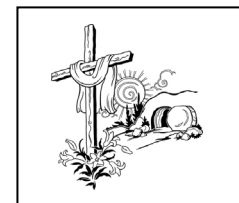
Welcome to Worship

THE EASTER GREETING

Christ is risen.

The Lord is risen indeed.

Alleluia!



PENITENCE *(We say sorry to God)*

**O God our loving Father, we are very sorry for all the things we
have done which make you sad. We have sometimes been selfish
or bad-tempered or disobedient. We are sorry for the things we
have failed to do, for the work we did not finish, the thank-you we
forgot to say, the friends we did not help, the quarrel we never
made up. For these and all our failings, forgive us through Jesus
Christ our Lord. Amen**

WE RECEIVE GOD'S FORGIVENESS

May God who loved the world so much that he sent his Son to be our
Saviour, forgive us our sins and make us holy to serve him in the world,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

PRAISE : Blessed is the Lord

For he has heard the voice of our prayer;

Therefore shall our hearts dance for joy

And in our song we will praise our God.

COLLECT OF THE DAY:

Almighty God,

whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life:
raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of
righteousness, that we may seek those things which are above,
where he reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen**

The Ministry of the Word

Psalm 66

Acts 17:22-31

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man’s design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

1 Peter 3:13-22

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it; for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. “Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened, but in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

John 14: 15-21

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”



Sixth of Easter

Acts 17:22-31; 1 Peter 3:13-22; Jn.14:15-21

Text: 1 Peter 3:15 Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have

One word has stood out for me during this time – it is the word HOPE. In this morning's epistle reading from 1 Peter 3 we are to be prepared to give an answer for that hope (v.15)

I enjoy detective stories and films, my particular favourite is Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot. There are not many court room scenes in that series, but when they occur a witness is asked to take the stand – they promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Then they are questioned about the evidence they are presenting. If they are a witness for the prosecution, they will be vigorously cross examined by the defence to see if any inconsistencies can be exposed which would undermine the integrity of their evidence. They need to be sure of their ground!

So a good theme this morning is **Take your stand**. It's about being sure of our ground, our faith as Christians. In the passage from Acts 17 Paul gives us a brilliant illustration. Using the altar with the designation TO AN UNKNOWN GOD, he builds a case to point to the existence of the one true God. He establishes common ground by emphasising what they are agreed on about God and then takes them on to a new way of thinking by pointing them to Jesus and his resurrection.

The city of Athens was the cultural, educational and philosophical centre of the Gentile world. Everywhere, down every street, in every corner, wherever a nook was found there was a statue of some pagan god or goddess.

Someone estimated that there were more than 30,000 gods in Athens! So Paul begins his sermon focussing on one of those gods.

You see how he makes his case – pointing out that the God who created everything cannot himself be created. He makes the creatures, the creatures don't make him. He is knowable – it is possible actually to find him; then the fact that his audience found most difficult to accept – the resurrection of Jesus and the reality of judgement.

32 ¶ At the phrase "raising him from the dead," the listeners split: Some laughed at him and walked off making jokes; others said, "Let's do this again. We want to hear more."

That's exactly what happens today when the Gospel is preached. Some people will want to hear more, to respond and believe, others will laugh and turn their backs.

But, like Paul we are to take our stand, to point to the one true God. Like Paul we might get a mixed reception, often a negative one, but that's not our problem. Our job is to be reliable witnesses and in order to do that we need to be well prepared. The more we know about the bible, what it means, and how to apply it to our lives, the more convincing our words will be. In fact people will not be interested if what we say doesn't match up with how we live. We might very well be the only sermon people will ever hear. Belief that behaves.

Going back to our court room analogy – if I was arrested for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict me?

People today are searching for God – and in these uncertain times, more than ever. Some are very religious; and like those men in Athens they perhaps have their altars to an unknown God as a kind of superstitious backup just in case. How sad it is that for many people they cannot believe that the one true God, creator of the universe, is not some far off tyrannical deity who has to be placated, but a loving father stretching out arms of love to embrace all who come to him.

I'm sure you know the song 'From a distance' written by Julie Gold in 1985, to inspire troops during the Gulf War. Best known version performed by Bette Midler. There are some beautiful lyrics:

There is harmony
And it echoes through the land
And its the hope of hopes
Its the love of loves
Its the heart of every man

But it is the refrain which saddens me:

God is watching us; God is watching us;
God is watching us **from a distance**.

Maybe it is more comfortable to keep God at a distance. Maybe for some of us it is easier to think of a God who is not intimately involved in our lives. But this is not what our faith is about. God longs for a relationship with each one of us. That's why Jesus went to the cross, defeated death and rose again.

In our gospel reading, we hear the words of Jesus, "If you love me, you will obey what I command. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever—17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

The same Holy Spirit lives with God's people today, reassuring us of the presence of God with us. Although Jesus is not physically present, he is with us and shares in all that we do. He does not watch from a distance.

So, when we take our stand, we do not stand alone, for we have a counsellor, the spirit of truth, our advocate and guide.