

PARISH OF BLESSED JAMES BELL

*Serving St Benedict's, St Mary's & St Oswald's
Warrington*



Celebrating Sunday at Home

5th Sunday of Easter (A)
10 May 2020

Preparation

It can be helpful to prepare a little space as a focus for your prayer. Perhaps light a candle or tea light and place it next to a crucifix or icon. You might like to include some flowers as well.

Easter Song

Why not choose an Easter Hymn or Song from YouTube or a CD to begin your time of prayer.

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

Greeting

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

R. He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Psalms 32

- 1 Ring out your joy to the Lord, O you just;
for praise is fitting for loyal hearts.
Give thanks to the Lord upon the harp,
with a ten-stringed lute sing him songs.**
- 2 For the word of the Lord is faithful
and all his works to be trusted.
The Lord loves justice and right
and fills the earth with his love.**
- 3 The Lord looks on those who revere him,
on those who hope in his love,
to rescue their souls from death,
to keep them alive in famine.**

Gospel Acclamation

'Alleluia' is our Easter song. Perhaps sing the Alleluia together using a version you all know.

Gospel

(John 14: 1-12)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

R. Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples:

'Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Trust in God still, and trust in me.

There are many rooms in my Father's house;

if there were not, I should have told you.

I am going now to prepare a place for you,

and after I have gone and prepared you a place,

I shall return to take you with me;

so that where I am

you may be too.

You know the way to the place where I am going.'

Thomas said, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?' Jesus said:

'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

No one can come to the Father except through me.

If you know me, you know my Father too.

From this moment you know him and have seen him.'

Philip said, 'Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied.' 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip,' said Jesus to him 'and you still do not know me?'

'To have seen me is to have seen the Father,
so how can you say, "Let us see the Father"?'
Do you not believe

that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

The words I say to you I do not speak as from myself:

it is the Father, living in me, who is doing this work.

You must believe me when I say

that I am in the Father and the Father is in me;

believe it on the evidence of this work,

if for no other reason.

I tell you most solemnly,

whoever believes in me

will perform the same works as I do myself,

he will perform even greater works,

because I am going to the Father.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection by Fr Chris Thomas

Many years ago, I met a blind woman living in a parish in the centre of Liverpool. When I visited her, she told me how she had lost her sight and how often people pitied her because of it. She went on to tell me that she felt sorrier for them for not realising that she could see at a level that many others could not, and she understood that level to be far more important. I often think of that encounter when I read John's Gospel because we are being invited to see at a much deeper level. We are being invited to see at a level that gives life deep within and the question that matters more than anything when we realise that is, can you trust God? You see that is what Ronald Rolheiser calls the acid test of faith. Can you trust this being that we call God? We can know all there is to know about religion and never learn the lesson of trust, never enter into a faith relationship with the Lord. Religion is all about

observance and practice. It is about rules and regulations. It is about knowledge and dogma and doctrine all of which are fine but are never enough.

Faith is about relationship, real life-giving relationship. It is about that simple trusting and moving with the prompting of the Spirit. It is about falling in love and living in love. It is only with that sort of relationship with God that we ever learn how to trust God. John's Gospel is all about the ebb and flow of relationship. You find Jesus using beautifully poetic language to express the life between himself and the Father, and himself and the believer. All the time the reader is being invited to enter into the same sort of relationship with the Father and with one another that Jesus has, that relationship of trust and deep inner life, which lets us know the living God. In the Gospel today we have Jesus saying to us 'trust in God still and trust in me.' That is sometimes a scary place to be because it does not promise anything. It does not promise that everything will turn out fine or that we will get what we want. It does not say that there will be a crock of gold at the end of the rainbow or that every cloud has a silver lining. Then we find him saying, 'I am the way, the truth and the life.' Again, it promises little other than an invitation to enter into relationship and to encounter the mystery of the God Jesus knew.

A friend of mine said that when she began to take God seriously, she thought everything in her life would be fine and when she found it wasn't, she felt conned. The only guarantee God gives us about life is that somehow God will be there in the mess. Don't escape into false religion that gives platitudes for answers but really helps no-one. Don't use God as a shield from the pain and heartache of life. Enter into whatever life throws at you and trust that God will be there. When everything within us rails against what is happening in our lives - bereavement, unemployment and broken relationships, when our world is falling apart and we seem to be sliding into the pit of darkness, the challenge is, will you trust God and believe that God will be present and that simply because of God's presence all will be well?

That is what Jesus had to do as he hung on the cross. He had to trust God in his darkest moment, and it was that trust in God that led him through death and into life. That is the invitation each of us is given during this Eastertide, to open our hearts and minds to the risen Lord, to learn how to trust in God and to find life in all its fullness.

Silent Reflection

A Poem by John O'Donohue

When the light lessens,
Causing colours to lose their courage,
And your eyes fix on the empty distance
That can open on either side
Of the surest line
To make all that is
Familiar and near
Seem suddenly foreign,

When the music of talk
Breaks apart into noise
And you hear your heart louden
While the voices around you
Slow down to leaden echoes
Turning silence
Into something stony and cold,

When the old ghosts come back
To feed on everywhere you felt sure,
Do not strengthen their hunger
By choosing fear;
Rather, decide to call on your heart
That it may grow clear and free
To welcome home your emptiness
That it may cleanse you
Like the clearest air
You could ever breathe.

Allow your loneliness time
To dissolve the shell of dross
That had closed around you;
Choose in this severe silence
To hear the one true voice
Your rushed life fears;
Cradle yourself like a child
Learning to trust what emerges,
So that gradually
You may come to know

That deep in that black hole
You will find the blue flower
That holds the mystical light
Which will illuminate in you
The glimmer of springtime.

Bidding Prayers

There are some Bidding Prayers on the Parish Website for today, or you may like to make your own prayers as an individual or group.

The Lord's Prayer

Concluding Prayer

God our Father,
each person is precious to you.
You are the Giver of life.
Have mercy on us and protect us at this time,
as the coronavirus threatens health and life.
You are an ever-present Helper in time of trouble.
Watch over those who are suffering,
give strength to those who are aiding the sick
and give courage to all in this time of anxiety.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Blessing

May the Lord bless us, keep us from all evil,
and bring us to everlasting life.

R. Amen.

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