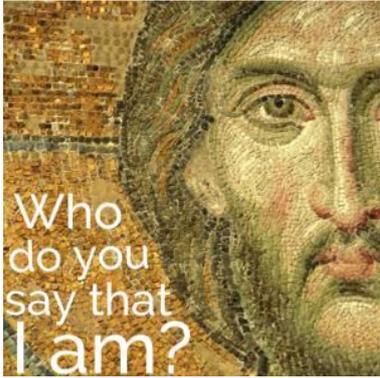


PARISH OF BLESSED JAMES BELL

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



21st Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

23rd August 2020

Entrance Procession

Music: The Church's one foundation – Samuel Wesley

Collect

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful to unite in a single purpose, grant your people to love what you command and to desire what you promise, that, amid the uncertainties of this world, our hearts may be fixed on that place where true gladness is found. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

R. Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

(Isaiah 22: 19-23)

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

Thus says the Lord of Hosts to Shebna, the master of the palace:
I dismiss you from your office,
I remove you from your post,
and the same day I call on my servant Eliakim son of Hilkiah.
I invest him with your robe,
gird him with your sash,
entrust him with your authority;
and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the House of Judah.
I place the key of the House of David on his shoulder;
should he open, no one shall close, should he close, no one shall open.
I drive him like a peg into a firm place;
he will become a throne of glory for his father's house.

The word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Psalm 137

Refrain:

**Lord, your love is eternal;
do not forsake the work of your hands.**

Gospel Acclamation (Lourdes)

Gospel

(Matthew 16: 13-20)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

R. Glory to you, O Lord.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said, 'the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.' Then he gave the disciples strict orders not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God
the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.**

Bidding Prayers

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of the Gifts

Music: Beati Quorum Via – Charles V Stanford

Prayer over the Offerings

O Lord, who gained for yourself a people by adoption through the one sacrifice offered once for all, bestow graciously on us, we pray, the gifts of unity and peace in your Church. Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Eucharistic Acclamations

Sanctus En Fa Majeur – Lourdes

The Mystery of Faith

When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Communion Rite

Music: Be still for the presence of the Lord – D Evans

Prayer after Communion

Complete within us, O Lord, we pray, the healing work of your mercy and graciously perfect and sustain us, so that in all things we may please you. Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Concluding Rite

Distribution of Communion

Music: I give my work to you, Lord – Margaret Rizza

Acknowledgements

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Reflection by Fr Chris Thomas *Director of the Irenaeus Project*

When I was a university chaplain many years ago, I used to take groups of students to the Poor Clare's when they still had a community in Liverpool. The students were always fascinated by the visit. It seemed to many of them a real waste of time to shut yourself off from the world and pray for the world. I always found it interesting how the buzz of chatter on the minibus would grind to a halt when we went through the gates to the monastery which would shut behind us. We would then be taken to the parlour by a silent extern sister. There we would wait for the other sisters to arrive. I think the students wondered if we would ever get out.

On one visit, the sisters came into the parlour and began to introduce themselves. There was one ancient looking lady who beamed around at us all and introduced herself as Sister Mary Francis. Almost as one, the other sisters turned around to her and said 'No you're not. We've told you this before'. It was very funny at the time but what struck me forcibly was the joy that exuded from those sisters. It was almost tangible even from the one who didn't quite know who she was. It was their relationship with Christ that filled those sisters with gratitude and his revelation of God's

love that flowed from them in their simplicity. It was their experience of the Lord in their lives that mattered to them and that enabled them to be a beacon of light to others.

In today's Gospel we hear the question that Jesus puts to his disciples, 'Who do you say I am?' How are we going to answer it? It's not enough to come to a dogmatic belief that Jesus is God because that's what we have been taught. It's a deeper call than that. The question is always, 'Who is Jesus for me?' Not just who is Jesus, but who is Jesus for me? Do I have a living personal relationship with him? Is he the centre of life for me? For those sisters in an enclosed convent in the heart of Liverpool, that's exactly who he was.

Peter, the spokesman for the first community, stands up and says, 'You are the Christ.' The Christ means the anointed one, set apart to give life real meaning. It's right that Peter should be the one to respond because, just a few chapters earlier, Matthew has him walking on the water. He's experienced who Jesus is. He knows that it's his relationship with the Lord that brings him life. He knows that when he fixes his eyes on Jesus he can even walk on water and that when he takes his eyes off the Lord he begins to sink. So he's able to say, 'You're the Christ.' It's on that sort of faith that Church can be built. It's to him that the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven are given and what are those keys? Love, forgiveness, reconciliation, compassion, mercy. They're the foundations of Church.

Ronald Rolheiser says, 'Jesus gave us the keys to crack it. They can be named: vulnerability, the refusal out of love to protect ourselves, self-sacrifice, putting others before ourselves, refusing to give back in kind when someone hurts us, a willingness to die for others, the refusal to give ourselves over to cynicism and bitterness when things beset us, continued trust in God and goodness even when things look the opposite, and especially forgiveness, having our hearts remain warm and hospitable, even when we have just cause for hatred.'

That way of living is never easy but it's the way of faith which is always about being vulnerable with one another, seeking goodness, being open, warm and hospitable when it's the last thing you want to be or in the eyes of the world should be. That's the reality of Church. The question for us is whether we want to give our lives to that reality or not. Do we want to build a Church based on relationship and all that means, relationship with the Lord and with one another empowered by the spirit or do we want to continue to build up a structure that is weighed down by the scourge of clericalism, and power and authoritarianism? My sense is that a Church built on those things will ultimately collapse and maybe that's what we're beginning to see.

However, a Church built on the power of faith in Christ and one another can never be overcome, a Church that is a servant seeking only to love, forgive and let compassion reign will last until the end of time. Let's have the courage to open ourselves to the Lord and build that Church.