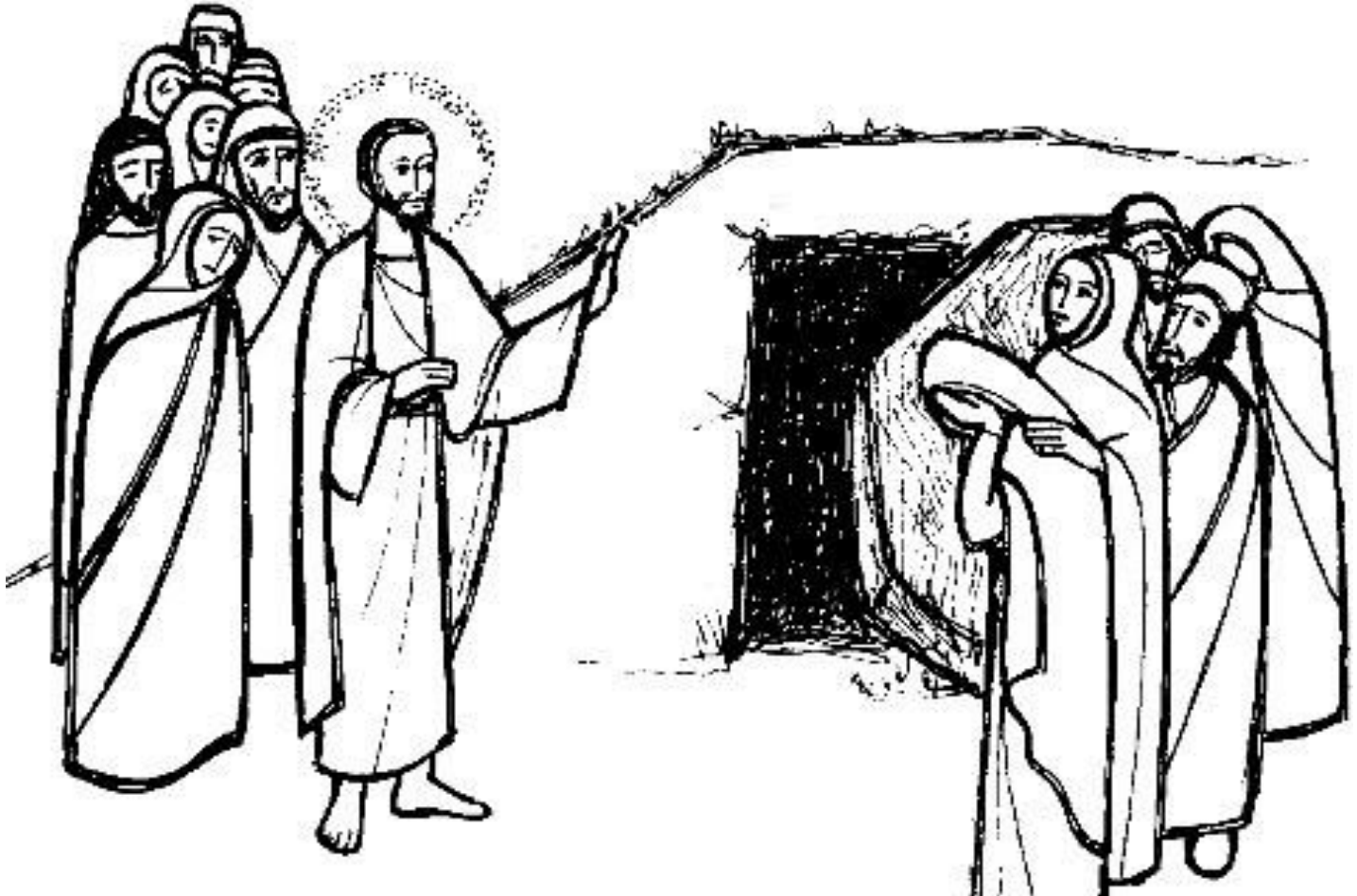


ParishNews



Blessed Sacrament Parish Heavitree Exeter

29 March 2020. Fifth Sunday of Lent. Year A



I am the Resurrection and the Life

The Gospel of the Fifth Sunday is perhaps the deepest meditation on the mystery of Baptism and membership of the Church. It is a prelude to the events of Easter Sunday, when we celebrate the triumph of life over death. To be plunged into the waters of baptism is to be buried with Christ, only to rise with him from the waters. This paradox of life and death is the content of today's readings. There is no more important part of our faith than the resurrection: that Christ rose from the dead is the very centre and heart of all that we believe - without it, our faith is useless. In the same way our belief in our own resurrection is vital: it is the most deeply needed gift that Christ gives us. This is why the climax of the instructions given to candidates for Baptism was this teaching: that Christ would give them life after death. Look ahead to the 3rd Sunday of Easter, where Saint Peter preaches to the crowds; what he teaches them is that life comes after death, as it did for Lazarus, and indeed, for Christ himself.

This week's Parish News looks a little different. We want to make sure that we keep in touch in what is a strange and challenging time. Even though the public liturgical life of the parish is suspended we are still a parish family. If you have any stories or reflections about what's happening in the parish which we could share email: exeter-heavitree@prcdtr.org.uk

Facebook BLESSED SACRAMENT EXETER Website WWW.BLESSEDSACRAMENT.ORG.UK

Living in a time of crisis

Following the Prime Minister's historic announcement on 23 March strengthening restrictions in an attempt to combat the spread of COVID-19, **Catholic Churches are closed to the public at this time.** Cardinal Vincent Nichols stresses that we must all play our part to safeguard the NHS and to save 'precious lives'. "We're going to play our full part in it. That was the call of St. Paul that we ought to be good citizens and today we ought to be good citizens playing our part in the protection of the vulnerable, in our support for the NHS and in the preserving of human life, which is so precious to God in the face of this virus."

What has happened to the Sunday Obligation?

The obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation is suspended for the duration of the crisis.

What about my Easter duties?

Bishop Mark writes:

In their letter of 18 March 2020, the President and the Vice-President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales said "*in these emergency circumstances, and for as long as they last, the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days is removed. This is, without doubt, the teaching of the Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2181). This pandemic is the 'serious reason' why this obligation does not apply at this time.*"

Many of the faithful will be aware of their Easter Duties; that is to receive Holy Communion during the Easter Season and by custom, to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation beforehand. The Code of Canon Law (CIC 920) says *each of the faithful is obliged to receive holy communion at least once a year. This precept must be fulfilled during the Easter season unless it is fulfilled for a just cause at another time during the year.* The requirement for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation comes from the need to be in a state of grace to receive Holy Communion (CIC 916).

As it is not possible for the faithful to receive Holy Communion at this time, and into the future, the Bishops of England and Wales have dispensed the Easter Duties for the year 2020.

The Bishops have asked that we all should make a Perfect Act of Contrition at this time. Perfect contrition (or a Contrition of Charity) is true and real sorrow for our sins which is created when we realise the immense love of God for each one of us. We express this contrition when we realise how we offend God by our sinful words, deeds and omissions in contrast to the immeasurable love and mercy that he continually shows us.

This requires us to be contrite of heart for what we have done, know and be overwhelmed by the love and mercy of God for his children, and to approach this grace with humility and resolution not to sin again.

An Act of Contrition

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Saviour Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

What about the Easter Triduum?

Fr Jonathan will celebrate the Easter Triduum alone in the church, but you are invited to join him in spirit at the following times:

9 April **MAUNDY THURSDAY Mass of the Lord's Supper** 7.00pm

10 April **GOOD FRIDAY Celebration of the Passion of the Lord** 3.00pm

11 April **HOLY SATURDAY The Easter Vigil** 8.00pm

He will be praying for our intentions during these celebrations and especially for those affected by the pandemic. Please keep him in your prayers.

We await further news about the following:

2020 Plymouth Diocese Pilgrimages to Lourdes, Knock, Medjugorje
Diocesan Catechetical Summer Camps 2020
Diocesan Retreats 2020
International Eucharist Congress
Joel's Bar

Preparing for Baptism

The remainder of our March course has had to be cancelled. Future courses are due to be held on July 11, 18, 25 and Nov 14, 21, 28. We will advise anyone interested in future courses if they will or will not be held.

Pope Francis on mercy...

Our Lord's mercy can be seen especially when He bends down to human misery and shows His compassion for those in need of understanding, healing, and forgiveness. Everything in Jesus speaks of mercy. Indeed he himself is mercy.

Rededication of England as Mary's Dowry

On 29 March England will be rededicated as the 'Dowry of Mary.' Bishop Mark will be celebrating Mass in the Cathedral that day and making the rededication at the end of Mass. This will happen in other Catholic Cathedrals across the country and in Walsingham www.behold2020.com/take-part.

Catholic Children's Society

The Catholic Children's Society (Plymouth) is looking for enthusiastic, new Trustee Directors to fill vacancies that have arisen as a result of retirement. We are particularly keen to achieve a more diverse board of trustees and we welcome applications from all sections of the community. The Board meets at least four times a year and whilst the position is voluntary and unpaid, reasonable travelling expenses are paid as per our policy. To find out more, please contact Shelagh Fearnley or Andrea Rodgers on 01364 645420 for an informal chat and an information pack.

Pope's April Intention

We pray that those suffering from addiction may be helped and accompanied.

Look & Ichthus sheets

These will be available by email (please email the parish office to be added to the distribution list)

Day of Prayer for Victims & Survivors of Abuse

Following the directive of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, that the worldwide Church should join in a day of prayer for survivors of abuse, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has designated the Friday of the fifth Sunday of Lent for this to take place. This year, it is to be on Friday, 3 April. There will be victims/survivors of abuse, and their families, in our parish communities. I am sure that they would appreciate knowing that we are praying for them, most especially on that day.

St Nick's News

"As you will be aware, St Nicholas school is closed to all children except those whose parents work for key identified services or for those who are extremely vulnerable. I am so proud of the staff at our school who have worked under huge pressure this week and volunteered to keep running throughout the Easter holidays to enable these key workers to keep the local services going.

Please pray for our children, families and staff during this hugely demanding time. In the words of Pope Francis, 'we can believe in the love of the people we have around us, and there we can find hope'."

Angela Folland Executive Headteacher

Masses at the Convent

Mass will not be celebrated at the Convent. We are sure you will understand and we will let you know as soon as they resume.

Keep up to date

Please see the parish Facebook page **Blessed Sacrament Exeter** and the parish website **blessed sacrament.org.uk** for up to date information and spiritual support.

Exeter Foodbank

The Foodbank would still appreciate any donations. Everyone is finding it hard to get food items at the moment but please spare a little for those who have none. Thank you. It will not be possible to leave your donations at the Church at this time. Why not save them up and we can collect them in the future?

Diocesan YouTube channel

Bishop Mark asks if you can please all click on the link below and subscribe to our Diocesan YouTube channel and ask others to do the same. With enough subscribers we will be able to stream live.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8KUEwsXFK3VBLEfn4H1tBw>

The God Who Speaks

The next sessions have had to be postponed, but the talks have been recorded and are available at www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk and on Facebook @plymouthdiocese. 1. How Catholics Read the Bible; 2. Christ in the Old Testament; 3. The Fulfilment of the Covenant in the New Testament. Let's use our 'lockdown' time profitably. Further Scriptural resources are available: www.stpaulrepository.com.

The Word

SUNDAY 29 MARCH *Fifth Sunday of Lent*

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 37:12-14. *I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live.*

The Lord says this: I am now going to open your graves; I mean to raise you from your graves, my people, and lead you back to the soil of Israel. And you will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people. And I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live, and I shall resettle you on your own soil; and you will know that I, the Lord, have said and done this – it is the Lord who speaks.

PSALM 129

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,
Lord, hear my voice!

O let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my pleading.

If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,
Lord, who would survive?

But with you is found forgiveness:
for this we revere you.

My soul is waiting for the Lord.
I count on his word.

My soul is longing for the Lord
more than watchman for daybreak.
(Let the watchman count on daybreak
and Israel on the Lord.)

Because with the Lord there is mercy
and fullness of redemption,
Israel indeed he will redeem
from all its iniquity.

SECOND READING

Romans 8:8-11. *The Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you.*

People who are interested only in unspiritual things can never be pleasing to God. Your interests, however, are not in the unspiritual, but in the spiritual, since the Spirit of God has made his home in you. In fact, unless you possessed the Spirit of Christ you would not belong to him. Though your body may be dead it is because of sin, but if Christ is in you then your spirit is life itself because you have been justified; and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

GOSPEL

John 11:1-45. *I am the resurrection and the life.*

There was a man named Lazarus who lived in the village of Bethany with the two sisters, Mary and Martha, and he was ill. It was the same Mary, the sister of the sick man Lazarus, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair. The sisters sent this message to Jesus, 'Lord, the man you love is ill.' On receiving the message, Jesus said, 'This sickness will end not in death but in God's glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified.'

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judaea.' The disciples said, 'Rabbi, it is not long since the Jews wanted to stone you; are you going back again?' Jesus replied:

'Are there not twelve hours in the day?

A man can walk in the daytime without stumbling

because he has the light of this world to see by;

but if he walks at night he stumbles,

because there is no light to guide him.'

He said that and then added, 'Our friend Lazarus is resting, I am going to wake him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he is able to rest he is sure to get better.' The phrase Jesus used referred to the death of Lazarus, but they thought that by 'rest' he meant 'sleep', so Jesus put it plainly, 'Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad I was not there because now you will believe. But let us go to him.' Then Thomas – known as the Twin – said to the other disciples, 'Let us go too, and die with him.'

On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to sympathise with them over their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you.' 'Your brother' said Jesus to her 'will rise again.' Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said:

'I am the resurrection and the life.

If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live,

and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Do you believe this?'

'Yes, Lord,' she said 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.'

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in a low voice, 'The Master is here and wants to see you.' Hearing this, Mary got up quickly and went to him. Jesus had not yet come into the village; he was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were in the house sympathising with Mary saw her get up so quickly and go out, they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

Mary went to Jesus, and as soon as she saw him she threw herself at his feet, saying, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept; and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!' But there were some who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man's death?' Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, 'Take the stone away.' Martha said to him, 'Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.'

Jesus replied, 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said:

'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer.

I knew indeed that you always hear me,
but I speak for the sake of all these who stand round me,
so that they may believe it was you who sent me.'

When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, here! Come out!' The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free.'

Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

SUNDAY 5 APRIL *Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord*

FIRST READING

Isaiah 50:4-7

*I did not cover my face against insult –
I know I shall not be shamed.*

Psalm Response

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

SECOND READING

Philippians 2:6-11

He humbled himself, but God raised him high.

GOSPEL

Matthew 26:14-27:66

The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ

SUNDAY 12 APRIL *Easter Sunday*

FIRST READING

Acts 10:34.37-43

We have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection.

Psalm Response

This day was made by the Lord; we rejoice and are glad.

SECOND READING

Colossians 3:1-4

You must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is.

GOSPEL

John 20:1-9

He must rise from the dead.

Hope in a time of crisis

We are living in unprecedented times. Some of you remember, and have recounted, what life was like during the Second World War, when there were severe restrictions on travel, food was rationed and people lived in fear. Of course these times are different but much of the same spirit has emerged. We've all been heartened and encouraged by the way ordinary people have responded to the needs of their neighbour, often encountering them properly for the first time. We've been humbled by the generosity and selflessness of those who work in the NHS, caring for us and our loved ones. May they all be strengthened in their vocation. Nevertheless we may still feel frightened; afraid of what might happen when we see the situation of the countries around us and the struggle they are having. As Christians we are called to place our trust in the Lord. The journey through darkness leads to light, the journey through sorrow and fear leads to hope, the journey through Lent leads to the light and joy of Easter. My prayer these days is that the Lord will protect and guard us from all harm, that he will comfort the sorrowful and calm the fears of those who are in distress. May he continue to bless us all and hold us in the palm of his hand. Fr Jonathan
