

St Teresa & St John Southworth Churches, Cleveleys

Fr Chris Cousens—Phone: 853340

Rev Bernard Ward (Deacon) (Tel: 858346)

Enquiries for St John Southworth: Phone: 853340

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<http://www.st-teresas-church.co.uk>

Email: st.teresas.cleveleys@gmail.com

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Trinity Sunday

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Gospel - John 3:16-18

Jesus said to Nicodemus,
"God loved the world so much
that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost
but may have eternal life.
For God sent his Son into the world
not to condemn the world,
but so that through him the world might be saved.
No one who believes in him will be condemned,
but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already,
because he has refused to believe
in the name of God's only Son."

Reflection:

A shamrock, a three-barred fire might help, but it is still difficult for us to grasp our Christian belief that we have three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in one God. In its simplest form, the Trinity expresses our one God revealed to us in three connected but different ways.

It might also seem an easy way out from the mystery, but in our daily lives many of us find that the most profound way in which God's nature is shown to us is in Jesus - Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter turned itinerant preacher, who slept, ate, got tired, knew fear and understood failure.

This fully human being was, in a way that is difficult to explain in human terms, also God. In Him we see what God is like 'for us', expressed through words, and compassionate and forgiving actions. Never before had God's qualities of tenderness and compassion, patience and loving kindness, been so clearly seen.

Having seen and heard Jesus in the Gospels, and in the work and words of those who came after Him, we can understand more of God, and by believing, or putting our trust in Him instead of just ourselves or man-made commodities, we can be saved - set free of so many things that weigh us down. But we can also turn a blind eye and deaf ear to God's offer, and reject it and all the hope it contains. The choice is ours. But remember - if we choose to see and hear what Jesus means for us, we might also appreciate the Father who sent Him, and the Holy Spirit who helps us respond with love. So much is expressed in the Gospel phrase we read for this Feast - "God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son".

Notices

* We remember in our prayers Roy White and Chris Grattan whose Funerals take place this coming week. We remember them and their families, and all those from our two parishes whose anniversaries occur at this time. May they rest in God's peace.

* There is now more talk, or just questions, about the reopening of our churches. At this time we still have no information as to when this will happen, but maybe a little more as to how this could happen. Recently Cardinal Vincent Nicholls has been asking the Government if we can open our churches **before** we restart any public Services so that people could come to pray in private. This would be at specific times/days of the week, and would demand social distancing, and supervision so that necessary cleansing can take place when the visit is finished. Some churches may not be able to provide all that. The churches opening to celebrate Mass and other Services again, would happen at a later stage, and then only under necessary regulations as to social distancing, numbers attending, and cleansing after each Service. Of course neither of these schemes on our journey to move out of lock-down can take place if they are not safe to proceed - safe for ourselves **and** safe for anyone we may meet.

Recently Bishop Paul has kindly sent us this following message :

COVID-19 Thank you to our clergy, diocesan employees and parishioners for their continued understanding, sacrifices and efforts to help in the battle against Covid-19. By extension, I wish to include the religious communities in our diocese, especially those caring for elderly or vulnerable members or residents, and the priests and staff at St Winefride's House in Blackpool.

I am also mindful of our schools and colleges, and am especially appreciative of the work being done by the Education Service, school staff and parents at this time, as we are looking how to re-open our education premises. We need to be prepared for helping to rebuild our parish communities, and our local communities in the months that follow. We should also have a particular concern for the poorest in the world, who will be badly affected by the virus, both in terms of their health in often cramped conditions, and economically. Donations of aid may be very important over the next few years.

I am aware that celebrating funerals represents a special hardship at this time. Relatives are often unable to visit their loved ones in their dying days, and then can only have a short service at the graveside or in a crematorium, with a few people present. Please continue to remind them that the Church is willing provide a service of burial of ashes, or a memorial Mass at a later date. Another option is a first anniversary of death Mass, which already happens in some places in the world.

For priests and some families, the inability to safely celebrate the sacrament of the sick is also painful, though I am aware that our priests involved in hospital settings are doing the best they can at this time, and can anoint the sick only when proper personal protective equipment is available. I also remember those priests involved in prison ministry and other specialist areas involving those affected by the coronavirus.

A good number of our parishioners are in higher risk categories by virtue of age or underlying health conditions. We also know that some ethnic groups seem to be disproportionately affected by the virus, many of whom have frontline roles at this time.

BISHOPS' STATEMENT THE GOVERNMENT'S COVID-19 RECOVERY "The timing and the manner of the opening of churches touches profound sensitivities and spiritual needs. The Government's document and statements fail to recognise this. The Government's position, established today, includes these steps aimed at opening churches as soon as possible: the establishment of a task force for places of worship, to work closely with 'stakeholders' in ensuring that premises are COVID-19 secure; and heeding the experience of other countries in which churches are already open for worship. In dialogue with the Government, the Catholic Church will continue its engagement in this process and has already submitted a detailed plan, in full accordance with public health guidelines, for churches to be opened for private prayer. The Church is ready to play its full part in the task force, understanding that this includes the possible earlier use of churches for private prayer, as a first safe step towards their use for public worship."

Paul Swarbrick Bishop of Lancaster

Reflections for the Coming Week

Monday (Thomas Merton)

The Lord made his world not in order to judge it, not in order merely to dominate it, to make it obey the dictates of an inscrutable and all-powerful will, not in order to find pleasure or displeasure in the way it worked. The Lord made the world and humans in order that he himself might descend into the world, that he himself might become man. The world was not made as a prison for fallen spirits who were rejected by God. The world was made as a temple, a paradise, into which God himself would descend to dwell familiarly with the spirits he had placed there to tend it for him.

Scripture (1 John 4:14-19)

We ourselves have seen and testify that the Father sent his Son as Saviour of the world. Anyone who acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God. We have recognised for ourselves, and put our faith in, the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. Love comes to its perfection in us when we can face the Day of Judgement fearlessly, because even in this world we have become as he is. In love there is no room for fear, because fear implies punishment and whoever is afraid has not come to perfection in love.

Tuesday (Julian of Norwich)

We are enfolded in the Father, and we are enfolded in the Son, and we are enfolded in the Holy Spirit. And the Father is enfolded in us, and the Son is enfolded in us, and the Holy Spirit is enfolded in us. Our soul rests in God its true peace; our soul stands in God its true strength, and is deep-rooted in God for endless love. And if we in our blindness and weakness should at any time fall, we should quickly rise and go at once to God in love; not on the one hand crawling abjectly as if we were in despair, nor, on the other, being over-bold as if we thought it did not matter.

Scripture (Exodus 34:4-6,8-9)

Moses went up Mount Sinai in the early morning as Yahweh had ordered. And Yahweh descended in a cloud and stood with him there and pronounced the name Yahweh. Then Yahweh passed before him and called out, 'Yahweh, Yahweh, God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in faithful love and constancy.' Moses immediately bowed to the ground in worship, then he said, 'If indeed I do enjoy your favour, please, my Lord, come with us, although they are an obstinate people; and forgive our faults and sins, and adopt us as your heritage.'

Wednesday (Cardinal Newman)

The Holy Spirit himself perchance in his mysterious nature, is the eternal love whereby the Father and the Son have dwelt in each other, as the ancient writers have believed; and what he is in heaven, that he is abundantly on earth. He lives in the Christian heart, as the never failing fountain of love. Thus the Spirit of God creates in us the simplicity and warmth of heart which children have, nay, rather the perfections of his heavenly hosts, high and low being joined together in his mysterious work.

Scripture (2 Cor. 3:12-18)

Moses put a veil over his face so that the Israelites should not watch the end of what is transitory. But their minds were closed; indeed, until this very day, the same veil remains over the reading of the Old Testament: it is not lifted for only in Christ is it done away with. As it is, to this day, whenever Moses is read their hearts are covered with a veil, and this veil will not be taken away until they turn to the Lord. Now this Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with our unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the image that we reflect with brighter and brighter glory; this is the working of the Lord who is the Spirit.

Thursday (St. Thomas Aquinas)

The meaning of possessing something is that it is in our power to use it and enjoy it at will. To have the power to rest joyfully in a divine person is ours by reason of grace alone. Still, as grace is given the Holy Spirit is possessed and dwells in a person and so it is he himself who is given and sent. Admittedly, effect of grace is also from the Father, who abides in us through grace even as do the Son and the Holy Spirit. The entire Trinity abides in the soul by reason of sanctifying grace.

Scripture (Ephesians 2:17-22)

He came to bring peace to you who are far off and peace to those who are near. Through him, then, we both in the one Spirit have free access to the Father. So you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are fellow-citizens with the Holy people of God and part of God's household. You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone. Every structure knit together in him grows into a holy temple in the Lord; and you, too, in him, are being built up into a dwelling-place of God in the Spirit.

Friday (St. John of the Cross)

It should not be held as incredible in a soul that the promise of the Son of God be fulfilled, the promise that the most Blessed Trinity will come and dwell in anyone who loves him. The Blessed Trinity inhabits the soul by divinely illumining its intellect with the wisdom of the Son, delighting its will in the Holy Spirit, and absorbing it powerfully and mightily in the unfathomable embrace of the Father's sweetness.

Scripture (Jn. 14:10-11,23,25-26)

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? What I say to you I do not speak of my own accord: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his works. You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; anyone who loves me will keep my word and my Father will love him, and we shall love him, and we shall come to him and make a home in him. I have said these things while still with you, but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything.

Martin Bennett