

Newsletter St Mary's & St Augustine's:
Sunday 19th April - The Second Sunday of Easter

Sunday's Bible readings: Psalm 16; Acts 2 : 14a, 22-32; John 20: 19 – 31

Wednesday's Bible readings: Psalm 34; John 3 : 16-21

Reflection for Sunday

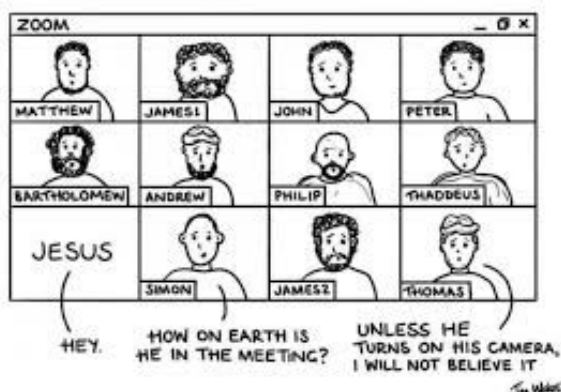
“Peace be with you” (John 20 : 19,21,26)

It seemed much more appropriate to be journeying through Lent whilst being in lockdown than it has been to celebrate Easter in lockdown – in Lent we read Psalms of lament and longing and our Bible readings were those set in slavery and exile. Now in the Easter season we are reading of surprises, rejoicing and new beginnings – yet we still wait in lockdown, not knowing when or how our new post-COVID beginnings will come. But a closer reading of the Gospel Resurrection stories reveal that they were circumstances of confusion and disbelief. In today's Gospel the disciples have locked themselves in, they are fearful and uncertain of the future, then Jesus stands in the midst of them and proclaims repeatedly “Peace be with you.” But this is not the quiet peace of a status quo, it is a disruptive but yet a reassuring peace - Jesus is Risen – It is the beginning of something new – Things can never be the same again.

I have been astounded during these weeks of lockdown, how Scripture speaks into this time with fresh layers of meaning and relevance. Ancient words of lament, of faith, of truth that speak God's presence into our current situation. “Lord you sometimes speak in wonders” is one of the songs that had been set for us this Sunday had we been gathered at St Mary's, it proclaims the wonder of Easter, the necessity of stillness and the relevance of God's word.

“Peace be with you” the Risen Christ's greeting that was and is both disruptive and reassuring. Christ speaks those words into our uncertainty, our fears, our being locked in. And just as Christ offered his wounded hands and feet and side to Thomas, struggling between faith and doubt, so he offers his wounded hands to us – to comfort, to strengthen, to disquiet and to reassure - as we find our way through this time. In addition, in these Sundays after Easter our attention is called to the Bible reading from Acts – Peter's great proclamation of the truths of the Christian faith, and now more than ever its good to hear again these eternal unchanging truths, the facts of Jesus' life, death and resurrection “written that you might believe...and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31)

*Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders
unmistakable and clear;
mighty signs to prove your presence,
overcoming doubt and fear.
Lord, you sometimes speak in whispers,
still and small and scarcely heard;
only those who want to listen
catch the all-important word.
Lord, you love to speak in Scripture:
words that summon from the page,
shown and taught us by your Spirit
with fresh light for every age.
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When we can't seem to find the right words to express our thoughts and feelings, we can use the prayers that others have written to speak for us "The Corners" has been one such prayer for me so I share it with you here – it also echoes the words of the hymn "Great is thy faithfulness"

The Corners by Nadia Bolz-Weber

Dear God,
Some of us are exhausted by a constant stream of bad news.
Some of us are exhausted from the effort of trying to not freak out.
Some of us are exhausted by not knowing how we will pay rent.
Some of us are exhausted from the effort of trying to entertain and educate and feed and love children who are stuck at home.
Some of us are exhausted by the 13 hour shifts in a hospital we no longer recognize, working a job we are afraid might kill us.
Some of us showed up to this pandemic with pre-existing physical and mental health conditions that were already exhausting.
Some of us are exhausted by loneliness.
Some of us are exhausted by waiting so long for a new season of Succession.
And some of us are exhausted by the effort of trying to make this all ok for everyone else.
Life is so strained and tender right now.
I know that not a single one of us is promised another day, God.
But I guess I am asking for the strength for just the one we are in.
Give us today our daily strength.
Strength for today, and if you could spare it, bright hope for tomorrow.
AMEN.

Congratulations

to Amy Hitchmough (Youth worker) and her husband James on the safe arrival of their new baby Phoebe – on Easter Sunday.
A sister for Rosa.

St Mary's has become a hub for emergency food distribution in response to the social impact of CV19. Volunteer drivers and phone call makers may be needed. Please contact Claire or Graham Duncan email : graham.duncan@stmarys-church.co.uk if you are able to help.

Collect for this Sunday

Risen Christ,
For whom no door is locked, and no entrance barred:
Open the doors of our hearts,
that we may seek the good of others
and walk the joyful road of sacrifice
and peace, to the praise of God.

The Easter season sheets for our Home Act of Worship were sent out with last weeks newsletter and are also on St Mary's website and facebook group– the suggestion is to gather in our homes at 10.30am on Sunday and 7pm on Wednesdays to share worship together but separately – or at a time which suits you !

Jem Clines will continue to offer a zoom service on Sunday morning at 11am - the meeting link is <https://zoom.us/j/95585710442> Or join via telephone, —you'll need to type in the meeting ID, which is: 955 8571 0442, once you've dialled one of these numbers below: 0208 080 6592; 0330 088 5830; 0131 460 1196; 0203 481 5237; 0203 481 5240; 0208 080 6591.

Roots resources are providing free prayers and reflections for adults, families and children for each Sunday - we often use these with Light Factory – adult and Light Factory Activity Sheets and colouring page can be accessed via this link

<https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2020/106-march-april-2020-a/easter-2/worshipathome>

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