

13th September 2020 – 14th Sunday after Trinity



Each Sunday our benefice produces a copy of Sunday link published by Redemptorist Publications. I guess many of you, like me, read the notices on one side and forget about the publication on the other side. Whilst I was on holiday last week, Adam relocated our printer into a higher position in the office, so I now see printing come off the printer at eye level. As I was printing off this Sunday's 'Sunday link' I was drawn to the reflections on Paul's reading to the Romans. As I couldn't word it better myself I thought I would share it with you. The reflection is by Julian Smith

'In these days of food fads and lose-weight-quickly diets it may be hard to understand why Roman Christians are so vexed about eating meat. The issue is clear and simple - is it right to eat meat sacrificed to an idol? Such meat is regularly on sale but with no provenance to guide them, how are Christians to know where their meat comes from? Some believe eating sacrificed meat makes no difference to their faith; others are not so sure and abstain from eating any meat. The issue becomes polarised and judgements are made about people and their faith - some are strong in faith, others weak. Being judgemental leads to division and this is where Paul steps in. He reminds the Romans of God's love and welcome for all who follow the way of Christ.

They are called to rejoice in the variety of those whom God calls, not to judge one another. Life would be much easier if they could agree one course of action, right or wrong, but they can't so fear takes over and positions harden. Perhaps it is part of human nature to be suspicious and fearful of those who are different from us, but it is not God's way, for God loves indiscriminately and lavishly. God also calls a strange assortment of people - something that becomes clear every time we look in a mirror.'

How true this is of the times we are living in today, everyone is coping with coronavirus in a different way but in a way they feel is most comfortable to them. Last Thursday evening I 'virtually' attended an Emergence Surgery through the Diocese. Due to the new legislation coming in on Monday, 51 people attended from right across the Diocese. I listened as some of the delegates sought advice on their individual problems of the moment. I was horrified to hear some of the compliance problems some churches were having regarding people complying with the guidance the Church of England have given us. The more the meeting went on, I became ever more relieved that by and large, at St Mary Magdalene, whatever we think of the rules, we are getting on with them, tolerating them and accepting that as harsh as they may feel at times, as much as we may not completely understand some of them or whatever our individual feelings are on the situation, they are there to make everyone feel comfortable and safe, welcome and unjudged. As the writer of the reflection said, 'God calls a strange assortment of people', never a truer word, but on Thursday evening I was never more grateful for the assortment of people that forms God church in Outlane.

This week our PCC are meeting to discuss moving forward, looking to establish a regular pattern of worship, to open the church building for its users and to once again to become a heart to our community. Please pray that God will guide us to make the right decisions in these ever changing times.

Collect for the day

Almighty God, whose only Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence: give us pure hearts and steadfast wills to worship you in spirit and in truth: through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

A reading from the book of Exodus

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:

“I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. ² The LORD is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him. ³ The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name. ⁴ “Pharaoh’s chariots and his army he cast into the sea; his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea. ⁵ The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. ⁶ Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power—your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy ⁷ In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries; you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble. ⁸ At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. ⁹ The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.’ ¹⁰ You blew with your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. ¹¹ “Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendour, doing wonders? ²⁰ Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. ²¹ And Miriam sang to them:

“Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.”



A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans

14 Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. ² Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. ³ Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

⁵ Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. ⁶ Those who observe the day, observe it in honour of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God.

⁷ We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸ If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." ¹² So then, each of us will be accountable to God.



A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

²¹ Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. ²³ “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵ and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.

Words from Fr Rodney

It is quite clear from the beginning of our gospel reading for today that Matthew was one of the later gospel writers as he refers to “the church”, something earlier writers would not have done. By the time Matthew was writing his gospel the early Church had grown and spread, and in Christian groups and communities more and more questions were arising as to how Christians were to behave and live with the issues and problems of life. People being people, problems of sin and forgiveness were always going to arise, and the question was how should Christians respond? But this story has a twist in it, the lord of the slave forgives him, but then the slave goes away and treats a fellow slave with the same problem without the same compassion or forgiveness. So what has this story to say to us as Christians? In our daily lives, we are called as Christians to mirror the way and the teaching of Jesus, and not least in

our dealings with others. Every time we come to church we ask God to forgive us, and our lives should mirror the same attitude and forgiveness to others with whom we share our lives. We cannot expect forgiveness from God for our sins, if we ourselves do not forgive!

Intercessions

Let us pray

Heavenly Father as we come together in faith we offer up our prayers for our churches here within our own parish and beyond. We give thanks for our successful live stream last week and for the continuing efforts to open up our churches to worship once again, as well as our ability to come together from our homes today. We also give thanks for the many talents amongst us that have made all of these things possible. We ask for your blessings and guidance on our church leaders and all those who are responsible for taking us forward in the current situation. We also remember all those throughout the world who continue to struggle to come together in your name for many reasons including the pandemic and pray that this situation changes in the near future. Amen

Heavenly Father we pray for our world struggling with so many problems. We pray for all those facing persecution, prejudice, violence, poverty and disease, especially those countries without the resources they need to help them. We pray for migrants who find themselves living in unimaginable conditions far away from everything they have known and loved, especially those burned out of their camp in Greece. We pray for aid agencies and our leaders as they attempt to respond to these problems and ask that compassion and a greater willingness to share your gifts replace greed, indifference and intolerance. Amen

Heavenly Father we bring before you are families, friends and communities. As we face new restrictions on those we can meet, give us the strength to deal with the difficulties this may cause us. We also ask for your blessings on the young people returning to school, college and university and ask that they be guided to act responsibly to keep each other and those in their wider community safe. We also continue to pray for wisdom and guidance for our own government and local leaders as they attempt to respond to an ever-changing situation and give thanks for our key workers and pray for their safety. Amen

Heavenly Father we bring before you all those who are sick in body mind or spirit, especially any we wish to pray for today.... We pray particularly for all those who are suffering in the pandemic, their families and all those who care for them as well as those working on treatments and vaccines. We pray for those whose treatment has been compromised, for all those who are anxious, afraid and lonely and we particularly pray for all those in our care homes. We ask that they and all those in need be given the comfort and strength they need at this time. Amen

Finally Father, we remember today all those who have gone before us, those who have died recently, especially in the pandemic, those whose anniversaries are around this time and any we wish to pray for ourselves today... we thank you for their love, friendship and our memories of them and we pray for comfort and peace for their loved ones. Finally, remembering God's gift of eternal life we ask that they rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen

In a moment of silence bring your own prayers

The Lords prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.