



Dear Friends,

I do hope that everyone continues to remain safe and well. Between Ascension Day and Pentecost, we have at St. Mary's been involved with Thy Kingdom Come in previous years. Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus. Since its start in May 2016, just three and a half years ago, God has grown Thy Kingdom Come from a dream of possibility into a movement. In 2019 Christians from 172 countries took part in praying 'Come Holy Spirit', so that friends and family, neighbours and colleagues might come to faith in Jesus Christ. This year we cannot organise some of the activities we had last year – you may remember the prayer tent – but we are all, during the 11 days of Thy Kingdom Come, encouraged to:

- Deepen our own relationship with Jesus Christ
- Pray for 5 friends or family to come to faith in Jesus
- Pray for the empowerment of the Spirit that we would be effective in our witness

Do have a look at the Thy Kingdom Come website www.thykingdomcome.global for prayers, resources and activities for families for this time.



Do please keep checking the church website (www.stmaryshadlow.org.uk) for news and services, and the church Facebook page too.

Every blessing,

Nicky rev.nickyharvey@gmail.com 01732 852564 / 07919 075470

Parish News

Ascension to Pentecost - There will be a different Morning Prayer service for the period between Ascension and Pentecost – available by clicking the usual button for Morning Prayer on the Home Page.

Zoom Coffee. We are planning to have coffee 'virtually' between 11.00am and 12.00pm again this Sunday after the service, via Zoom. If you would like to join us, please contact me via email so I can send you a link.

Financial giving. Thank you to all who are continuing to give to St. Mary's at this time. Your contributions are vital. While saving money on heating, lighting and salaries the church still needs funds for ministry and ongoing costs. With the church closed we are losing income from fund-raising events and collections. If you can and would like to give on a regular basis, a standing order with your bank would be much appreciated. Equally one-off donations can be made by bank transfer too. Please contact me on mhmassy@btinternet.com or 07725 603952 for further details, or if you would like to give by cheque or have your envelopes collected. Martin Massy – Treasurer

Materials still needed. Many people in the village are sewing scrubs etc. for the NHS. They require more sheets, duvet covers, elastic or tape. If you have anything to donate, please ring Rev. Nicky on 01732 852564 to arrange collection. Thank you.

Collect for the 7th Sunday of Easter

O God the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: we beseech you, leave us not comfortless, but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen

Prayers for the Week

We pray for all those living in:

Maltings Close and Toby Gardens

We pray for those who have recently died:

Bill Green, Joan Ball, Rodney Mannell, Helen Hibbs and Margaret Smith

At the anniversary of her death this week we pray for

Barbara Fermor

From our Book of Remembrance, we pray for:

Elizabeth Chilton (25th)

Mary Knowles (26th)

Joyce Wood (28th)

Janice Bowden (28th)

Sarah Jane Epsley (29th)

Allan Henry Watson (29th)

Rupert Weld-Smith (29th)

Margaret Lorna Thom (30th)



Homily from Ascension Day, Thursday 21st May 2020 – (Acts 1: 1-11, Luke 24: 44-end)

I wonder if you agree with me if I say we live in a world in which it appears that up is better than down. After all everyone would rather have an up day than a down day. Singers want to be at the top of the charts, athletes want to be on top of their game, and students want to be at the top of the class. When the stock market rises we celebrate, but despair when it crashes down. No one wants to be at the bottom of someone's list. We work to climb, not to descend the career ladder. We hear and read about mountain climbers but not much is said or written about valley descenders. And recently, the joy of a young child showing me how high they can jump and, at least for a moment, defy gravity.

The reality is that we want to live ascended lives. We want to break free from the things that hold us down and rise above it all. And there is nothing wrong with that. In fact, it is right. Something within us knows that we are more than earthbound creatures. The problem is that we have distorted what ascension and an ascended life mean. We forget, or perhaps deny, that Christ's ascension seats humanity next to God, and settle for attempted self-ascension.

That distortion has invaded our theology and understanding of God. In this distorted view God, heaven and holiness are up there somewhere while we stuck down here. So, we spend our time jumping up and down like little children thinking if we jump hard enough, high enough, and fast enough we can touch the starry heavens. This gets lived out in so many ways in our lives. It almost always involves comparison, competition, and judgment of some kind. We compare ourselves and our lives with other people and their lives. We compete with each other believing that for us to ascend the other has to descend or at least not jump as high as us. We are forever judging ourselves and one another. We fill our lives with busyness hoping to climb to new levels and heights. A life of self-ascension keeps us always searching for the next level.

Our attempts at self-ascension break up our world and our lives. They separate the creature from the creator. They destroy relationships and intimacy. Ultimately, they become the gravity that deny us the ascended life we are seeking. A life that, in reality, is already ours.

Jesus' ascension reshapes our disfigured understanding of an ascended life. His ascension is the corrective and antidote to the breaking up and separation of self-ascension. His is the only authentic and life-giving ascension and it is through him we too can live ascended lives.

Jesus' ascension is not about his absence but about his presence. It is not about his leaving but about "the fullness of him who fills all in all." It is not about a location but about a relationship.

The ascension of Jesus completes the resurrection. The resurrection is victory over death. The ascension, however, lifts humanity up to heaven. Jesus' ascension seats human flesh, your flesh, and my flesh, at the right hand of God the Father. We now partake of God's glory and divinity.

The ascension is more about letting go than it is reaching and grasping. The question for us is not, "How do we ascend?" That has already been accomplished. The question is: "What pulls us down?"

What do we need to let go of? Fear, anger, or resentment often weigh us down. The need to be right or be in control is a heavy burden. For some self-righteousness, jealousy, or pride is their gravity. Many of us will be caught in the chains of perfectionism and the need to prove we are enough. For others it may be indifference or apathy. Gravity takes many forms and I wonder, what is the gravity that denies you Jesus' ascension?

The gravity that keeps us down is not creation or the circumstances of our lives. Gravity is not around us but within us. So as you begin to look at your life and identify the places of gravity, do not despair. The very things that hold us down also point the way to ascension. Our participation in Jesus' ascension begins not by looking up but by looking within.

Amen