



Dear Friends,

I do hope that everyone continues to remain safe and well at this time.

The Feast of Pentecost, that occurs fifty days after Easter, is upon us. It is on this day that Christians remember the story of the Holy Spirit descending on the early Christians, giving them the courage and strength to go out and spread the message that Jesus had passed on to them. I am always reminded at this time of year of that wonderful hymn 'Come down O Love divine'. The words of the hymn are a translation of a poem by Bianco de Siena (c.1350-1434) who belonged to an order of friars called the Jesuates, known for their mystical and ecstatic practices of prayer. The poem was translated by Dr Richard Littledale (1833-90) and set to music by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958). Vaughan Williams named his hymn tune 'Down Ampney' after his birthplace in Gloucestershire.

While our church buildings have been shut, the Holy Spirit has certainly not been locked in! It has been wonderful to see and hear about so many people connecting to online and live-streamed services who would not necessarily have come into the buildings. So, this Pentecost my prayer is that the Holy Spirit continues to flow in us and through us in the coming days and weeks. I leave you with the first verse of the hymn as a prayer.

Come down, O Love divine,  
seek thou this soul of mine,  
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear,  
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.  
Amen



Do please keep checking the church website ([www.stmaryshadlow.org.uk](http://www.stmaryshadlow.org.uk)) for news and services, and the church Facebook page.

Every blessing,

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## Parish News

Paul returns to parish work from his Sabbatical on Monday 1 June. Meanwhile, Nicky will be taking a well-deserved break after three months of holding the fort. Huge thanks to her for all her hard work and excellent care of the parish under such exceptional circumstances.

**June Services** A list of all livestreamed services for June is available on the website. At present the plan is for weekday services to be streamed on the Church Facebook live page – some (especially the communion services) will be from the Lady Chapel and some from the Vicarage. Sunday services are planned to be livestreamed by Zoom; invites will be sent out to the mailchimp mailing list and advertised on the facebook page.

**Hadlow Parish Assistance Scheme** This scheme will cease to be operational from the 1<sup>st</sup> June although help can still be given if required. A big thank you to all those who volunteered their time to help others during the lockdown. If help is required, please contact Tonbridge and Malling Community Hub on 01732 876152 or Kent Together on 03000419292.

**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 to maintaining ministry and meeting ongoing costs. If you would like to give on a regular basis, a standing order with your bank would be much appreciated. Please contact me on [mhmassy@btinternet.com](mailto: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

**Sewing for the NHS and Care Workers** The Hadlow group have done an amazing job of sewing much-needed scrubs for local hospitals and care workers. As the rate of new COVID-19 infections is thankfully on the decline, the demand for PPE has slowed down and therefore the group is no longer active. A big thank you to everyone for their hard work sewing scrubs or donating material.

### **Collect for the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter**

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father,  
ignite in us your holy fire;  
strengthen your children with the gift of faith,  
revive your Church with the breath of love,  
and renew the face of the earth,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

### **Next Week's Readings**

Isaiah 40:12-17, 27-31  
Matthew 28:16-20

### **Prayers for the Week**

#### **We pray for all those living in:**

Hailstone Close and Dray Court

#### **We pray for those who have recently died:**

Helen Hibbs,  
Margaret Smith,  
Brenda Hammerton  
John Soper  
Bruno Argento

#### **From our Book of Remembrance we pray for:**

Archibald Swainson (Priest),  
Joan Plowright (1<sup>st</sup>),  
Kenvyn Ritchie Trefor Davies (1<sup>st</sup>),  
George Ellard (2<sup>nd</sup>),  
John Macnamara (2<sup>nd</sup>),  
Ross Morgan (2<sup>nd</sup>),  
Joan Turner (4<sup>th</sup>),  
Raymond Charles Norbury (4<sup>th</sup>)  
Adam Simons (6<sup>th</sup>)

### **Nicky's Homily of 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020** – *Acts 20: 28-end, John 17: 11-19*

The human instinct to danger is fight or flight. Neither one, however, really changes the situation. One adds to violence and increases the danger. Someone will get hurt, life will be lost. The other creates and opens a space and a place for the danger to exist. The circumstances that we perceive as dangerous are real, but they really just point to deeper issues. They are symptoms of what is going on within the human heart. They reveal the wounds and brokenness that often stand in opposition to the life, love, and ways of God. This opposition is what John means by "the world."

John is not talking about the created order, nature. That was created good and remains so. "The world" refers to the different operating systems that we use, and have come to accept as normal, to order human life: our social, cultural, political, and economic structures. Far too often those systems both arise from, and create fear, anger, division, injustice, and greed. That is the world into which Jesus sent his disciples, and it remains the world in which we live and practice our faith today.

Jesus knows that the human ordering of life is often contrary and even opposed to God's ordering of life. That concern is the subject of his prayer in today's gospel.

Jesus neither runs from nor fights the danger of the world. He offers a different way. He loves and prays. He lays down his life in love. He prays for us, the ones who will continue his life and work in the world. We live in the world, but we do not belong to it. We belong to Jesus and the Father.

Jesus prays that his joy may be made complete in us. This happens in the midst of the world and its dangers. It is neither running away from the systems of the world nor standing up to them but laying down life before them in witness to Christ's love. Jesus does not pray that it would be easy or that we would be taken out of the world. Instead, he prays for our protection in the world. Live the amen.

It is not enough to just hear Jesus' prayer. His words ask that we live, act, and work with God in answering his prayer. We are to actively participate in Jesus' prayer by shaping our life to be increasingly like his. So, while we might give an "amen" to Jesus' prayer we must also examine our own hearts and ask ourselves some hard questions.

The real issue is not about what's out there in the world, but about what's in our hearts. How do we benefit from, participate in, and foster the systems of the world that oppose God's life? To the degree we do, we deny God our life and contribute to the darkness of the world and that is not God's desire or hope for our lives or the world.

All humanity is worth so much more than that. Jesus' own life and prayer declare that. We are the gift he and his Father share and exchange between themselves. Jesus entrusts us to his Father's protection even as he entrusted himself to the Father.

"Protect them," Jesus prays. In large part the answer to Jesus' prayer rests in our hands, our hearts, and our "amen," not just a spoken amen, but a lived amen.

Live the amen. Offer forgiveness rather than retribution, mercy instead of condemnation, and compassion rather than indifference. Lay down your life in love for another. See life through the lens of beauty and not cynicism. Choose unity over individualism and God's ways over personal agendas. In those moments you are the amen to Jesus' prayer, your heart is healed, and the world is different.

Amen