

Newsletter Easter 7 St Mary's and St Augustine's

Sunday's Readings: Acts 1. 6-14; 1Peter 4.12-14, 5.6-11; John 17.1-17; Ezekiel 36.24-28

Wednesday's Readings: Psalm 46; Deut 31.29 – 32.14; 1 John 3.11-end.

As I have been trying to relax and watch BBC iPlayer this last week I have been frustrated with a constant 'buffering' which has meant I have only be able to watch 5 minutes of a programme before the connection is lost. This time of Covid can seem like a constant buffering, an in between space: before a connection is established and we can see clearly again; and feel like we are on solid ground and know the way ahead. There are photographs on my wall in my house of times passed with family and friends, meals together hugs, celebrations, I wonder at what new world we are entering into. When our connections are remote and we may feel a constant sense of buffering, hankering after life past and uncertain of what the future may bring. As a friend said to me this week, if you are beginning to feel a bit rubbish about it all, you are not alone. This new normal is exhausting and not what any of us would choose.

Our Church is now holding space between the ascension and the coming again of the Holy Spirit, a betwixt and between time, not unlike our Holy Saturday. The going of Jesus back to the Father was the fulfilment of the promise but for the disciples looking up into the sky (Acts 1.10), they just saw only loss, they too felt in a buffer zone. This Jesus who had been returned to them after the resurrection had disappeared again! The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost but the first disciples would not have known this. It is in these days of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost that we also wait to be filled afresh with the Holy Spirit, the advocate, the helper, the healer. That the Holy Spirit may equip us and enable us and release the gifts of the Church for the people, for all people, that we may be active in the world, like the grains of yeast which caused the whole batch of dough to rise.

The Holy Spirit will come afresh to us and bring her gifts for us but they may be gifts we do not recognise at first. The horizon, when all of this will have passed, is still out of sight so the looking to the future with hope can be exhausting. But we are not asked to reimagine the future or pretend that the post Covid world is going to be better than the world we have left. We have a long road ahead of us and there will be many bumps yet to come. We are asked to be honest and to be faithful and to be prayerful and to wait for God's gifts to come and that in the miracle of waiting God may surprise us with her joy, her presence and turn "our hearts of stone to flesh (Ezekiel 37.36). It is a little like driving a car at night. You can only see as far as your head lights, but you can make the whole trip that way. You don't have to see where you are going, your destination or everything you will pass along the way. You just have to see two or three feet ahead of you.

We may be longing to get to the end of all of this but it is not within our gift, like a flower that is in tight bud we cannot force it open too soon, we must wait and endure. So faithfully now, in this buffering time between Ascension and Pentecost, in this buffering time, 'when our brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering, we humble ourselves before the

My grandmother once gave me a tip:

In difficult times you move forward in small steps.

Do what you have to do, but little by little, don't think about the future, or what may happen tomorrow.

Wash the dishes.

Remove the dust.

Make a soup.

You see?

You are advancing step by step.

Take a step and stop. Rest a little.

Praise yourself. Take another step.

Then another. You won't notice, but your steps will grow more and more.

And the time will come when you can think about the future without crying.

Elena Mikhalkova

mighty hand of God' (1 Peter 5. 6-11) and wait, and wait, and prayer that her Holy Spirit may come to our aid.

No: it is not yours to open buds into blossoms.
Shake the bud, strike it; it is beyond your power to make it blossom.

Your touch soils it, you tear its petals to pieces and strew them in the dust.

But no colours appear, and no perfume.

Ah! It is not for you to open the bud into a blossom.

He who can open the bud does it so simply.
He gives it a glance, and the life sap stirs through its veins.
At his breath the flower spreads its wings and flutters in the wind.

Colours flush out like heart-longings, the perfume betrays a sweet secret.

He who can open the bud does it so simply.

Rabindranath Tagore

Prayer for Ascensiontide

O God,
You withdraw from our sight
That you may be known by our love;
Help us to enter the cloud
Where you are hidden,
And surrender all our certainty
To the darkness of faith
In Jesus Christ, Amen.

If you feel able please use the prayer resources on a separate sheet to mark the **10 Days of Prayer**, the suggestion is to maybe set aside just 2 minutes each day and use the prayers & readings on the sheet. There are resources for children/young people on Roots and also many more resources online at Thy Kingdom Come.

Yo Tozer-Loft has offered to co-ordinate a **24-hr prayer marathon for Sat 30th May**, Pentecost Eve, if you want to take part for a 30 mins slot please contact her 07925 634420 for a time slot. Text or phone Yo.

Jem Clines will continue to offer a **zoom service** on Sunday mornings at 11am - the meeting link is 955-8571-0442 join from 10.45am via zoom or by phone using one of these numbers 0208 080 6592; 0330 088 5830; 0131 460 1196; 0203 481 5237; 0203 481 5240; 0208 080 6591. This will run until Pentecost then we will have a rethink.

Roots resources are providing free prayers and reflections for adults, families and children for each Sunday <https://www.rootsontheweb.com/i-am-looking-for/public-copies/worshipathome10may>

Thy Kingdom Come Beacon Event remotely from Rotherham Minster 4pm Sunday 31st May. Canon Sophie will be preaching. Tickets on line **EventBrite registration link:** <https://sheffdio.org/tkc20>

Check out this link. St Marys continue to provide emergency food provision across the city. **Bread for Sheffield** is a fundraiser to help support the work. <https://breadforsheffield.wixsite.com/flour>

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