

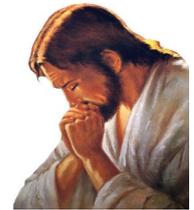
**St. Thomas' Cardiff & All Saints Boolaroo**

**7TH SUNDAY OF EASTER  
(Sunday After Ascension)**

**24th May 2020**

Christ is Risen  
He is Risen Indeed

Our help is in the Name of the Lord;  
The Maker of heaven and earth.



O God, whose Son, Jesus, prayed for his disciples, and sent them into the world to proclaim the coming of your kingdom: by your Holy Spirit, hold the Church in unity, and keep it faithful to your word, so that, breaking bread together, we may be one with Christ in faith and love and service, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2.38–39

**CONFESSION**

Heavenly Father, we confess to you our fears, our worries, and our anxieties. You have given us your perfect love which casts out all fear and your peace which transcends all understanding, but even still we feel dislodged, displaced, untethered, and uncertain during these times.  
We believe, Lord; help our unbelief.

Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.

O God, make speed to save us.  
O Lord, make haste to help us.

**READINGS**

**First Reading**

**Acts 1:6-14**

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.' Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

Hear the word of the Lord  
Thanks be to God

**Psalm**

**Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35**

God shall arise, and his enemies shall be scattered: those that hate him shall flee before his face.

As smoke is dispersed, so shall they be dispersed: as wax melts before a fire, so shall the wicked perish at the presence of God.

But the righteous shall be glad and exult before God: they shall rejoice with gladness.

O sing to God, sing praises to his name: glorify him that rode through the deserts, him whose name is the Lord, and exult before him.

He is the father of the fatherless, he upholds the cause of the widow: God in his holy dwelling place.

He gives the desolate a home to dwell in, and brings the prisoners out into prosperity: but rebels must dwell in a barren land.

O God, when you went out before your people: when you marched through the wilderness,

The earth shook, the heavens poured down water: before the God of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel.

You showered down a generous rain, O God: you prepared the land of your possession when it was weary.

And there your people settled: in the place that your goodness, O God, had made ready for the poor.

Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth: O sing praises to the Lord, to him that rides upon the highest heavens, that were from the beginning: who utters his voice, which is a mighty voice.

Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel: and his might is in the clouds.

Terrible is God who comes from his holy place: the God of Israel who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God.

## **Second Reading**

**1 Peter 5**

### A Reading From Peter's First Letter

Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away. In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for ‘God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. Through Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful brother, I have written this short letter to encourage you, and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. Your sister church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

## **Gospel**

**John 17:20-26**

The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John chapter seventeen beginning at the twentieth verse. Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

‘I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ‘Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.’

For the gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Talk: [7th Sunday of Easter](#) (Click)

Let us together affirm the faith of the Church

We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made,  
of one being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

For he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my  
helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" Hebrew 13:5-6

## INTERCESSIONS

Let us pray

Almighty God, may our prayers ascend to you just as Jesus Christ, your son, was taken up to heaven. As  
we celebrate the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus let it inspire in us feelings of joy and hope rather than fear  
and separation as we await the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Almighty God, You have called us to be Your children.. Your church, Your body.. and have made us mem-  
bers of one another and joint-heirs with Christ. We pray for grace and unity in the Church and ask that You  
would help us all to live in loving fellowship - and may we be united as one in Christ, Help the whole  
church of God to live together in joyful harmony and sweet unity and may we learn to work together with  
one mind and one purpose – to lift up the name of Jesus and to point people to the Rock of our salvation.  
Keep us from selfish ambition and may we become humble in spirit, as we look to the Lord Jesus, the  
author and finisher of our faith and our perfect pattern for living in Christian unity, as befits Your children.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Everlasting God we pray for our Bishop Peter, his assistants Charlie and Sonia, all Church Leaders and  
clergy. Guide Fr Gary and our wardens, Denise, Laurel and Wayne as they navigate the way forward

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Creator God, we pray for our troubled world its peoples and their leaders. We pray for those caught up in  
war, and violence, and hatred; especially the innocent victims of these evils and those who are abused  
because of Christ. May peace abound and righteousness flourish, that we may vanquish injustice and  
wrong and that the suffering won't last forever.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Loving God, we pray for all those in need; for those who are filled with guilt; who are broken-hearted; who  
are confused and afraid; or saddened because a relationship has broken down. We pray for all suffering  
from illness, for Brook, those on our prayer lists, those affected by the coronavirus and those we carry in  
our hearts and give joyful thanks for those on the road to recovery.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Merciful God, we pray for all who have died; especially those who encouraged us in our faith by their  
example. As we pray for them, may they in turn continue to pray for us that we may stay true to our faith  
and give the same kind of example ourselves to others. We pray for those whose anniversaries occur at this  
time.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Faithful God, as we go out into the coming week make us mindful that we should constantly pray for your world and your people just as Jesus, your son, prayed for his disciple before returning to you.  
Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.

### **SPIRITUAL COMMUNION**

Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.  
Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.  
Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us your peace.

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I ask you to come spiritually into my heart. O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Lord, in these days of mercy, make us quiet and prayerful;  
in these days of challenge, make us stronger in you;  
in these days of emptiness, take possession of us;  
in these days of waiting, open our hearts to the  
mystery of your cross. Amen

May the Lord Jesus Christ be with us to protect us.  
May he go before us to guide us, and stand behind us to give us strength.  
May he look upon us, to keep us, and bless us. Amen

### **REFLECTIONS ON READINGS**

If the Ascension has led us to faith in a disembodied, removed God who is watching us “from a distance”, we have missed its message. Whatever the disciples actually saw happen that day, the facts of the experience are far less important than the meaning. The Ascension certainly does not mean that heaven is “up”, hell is “down” and God is looking down on us from some far removed place. Rather, the Ascension offers us a number of crucial truths that, in this world of injustice and inequality, we desperately need to reclaim. First the fact that Jesus did not die, but was seen to “return” to the Godhead physically is a continuation of the story of incarnation. God does not despise the human body – rather God embraces it, inhabits it and glorifies it, making human flesh part of the Godhead! This means that the needs of the body – for food, clean water, sanitation, shelter, and loving, intimate touch – are all part of the Gospel and are included in God’s gift of salvation. Secondly, the Ascension declares as clearly and loudly as can be that Jesus, and not Caesar (nor any other Empire, government, system or social hierarchy) is Lord over all. This means that our ultimate allegiance must be to Christ first, and that our lives are called to be a reflection of Christ’s reign in the midst of the other forces and ‘lords’ that influence and control our world. Finally, the Ascension always comes with the promise of the Holy Spirit’s power which tells us that God is not absent and removed from us, but continues to be completely immersed in the world and in the lives of human beings. The gift of the Spirit also assures us of God’s resources and God’s inspiration and God’s guidance to strengthen and enable us as we seek to live as faithful followers of Christ. It may be tempting to make this celebration about Christian triumphalism, but that would be to deny the meaning of Christ’s earthly life. Rather, the Ascension is the necessary next step in that life, ensuring that God remains involved with human beings, that God’s presence continues to be available to us, and that we know that everything that makes us human – including our physicality – has been embraced and welcomed into God. It’s less about “Christianity” defeating all, and more about Christ drawing all things into the life of God.

## FR GARY'S SERMON

The evangelist John R. Rice once wrote, "I once imagined I was in Heaven. Walking along with the angel Gabriel, I said, 'Gabe, what is that big building there?' " 'You'll be disappointed,' he answered. 'I don't think you want to see it.' But I insisted, and he showed me floor after floor of beautiful gifts, (show the giftbox) like this one, all wrapped and ready to be sent." 'Gabriel, what are all these?' I asked. "He said, 'We wrapped these things, but people never called for them.'

Often people don't realize that there are some things God will not give us if we don't ask for them in prayer. And no doubt this was one of the reasons why Jesus spent so much time in prayer. But it's not often that the Gospels have any detailed record of the contents of Jesus' prayers. John, the closest of Jesus' disciples, must have often heard Jesus praying.

The particular prayer, we have in this morning's gospel reading is usually called the high priestly prayer, because in it Jesus is praying for all his followers in a similar manner to the way in which the Jewish high priest would pray for his people on the day of atonement.

Jesus said this prayer in the early hours of the spring evening, when he was sitting at dinner with his 12 closest friends, in the upper room of a little house in the ancient city of Jerusalem. He knew that his time on earth was almost done, that the end of this earthly journey was at hand, and that he was sharing a last meal with those who had been his constant companions during his brief ministry -- a ministry that spanned only three years. But as the supper and the evening wore on, there was something in the scene and the setting that deeply concerned our Lord. It wasn't fear of what awaited him beyond the horizon of tomorrow; he was totally accepting of the Father's will, he would not do anything to evade the cross.

No, what caused him so grave a concern was his awareness that there was turmoil around the table. Jesus looked at his disciples, deep within their hearts and saw there the potential for conflict, disagreement, and misunderstanding that could literally tear them apart.

Jesus looked around the table at those with whom he had intimately shared the last three years of his life and was now sharing this last supper before his death. Out of the individual differences, personalities, ambitions, and varying understandings of his true purpose for them as his disciples, he saw a potential for such antagonism, hostility, animosity, and tension, that without their overriding commitment to and love for him, they would have been at loggerheads with each other. It was their love for him, that bound them together as one, and now he would no longer be with them, sharing their history. Jesus had good cause to be concerned, for there was "turmoil around the table."

And Jesus saw in that little group, men possessed with such differences that without him there was little, if any, reason or possibility for them to be joined together or bound as one in common hope or purpose. Realizing the presence of such tension and turmoil, Jesus lifted them to the Father in a great and passionate prayer. Praying that his disciples should be one, with a unity and love that reflects the perfect relationship that exists within the Trinity.

And that oneness was achieved, for not long after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, the followers of the risen Lord came together and committed themselves to live not for themselves, but for Christ Jesus. When they made that commitment, the Holy Spirit came upon them with such power and might that others caught the vision and inspiration and made the same commitment. Then others and again others and on and on until within a few years, that small group had grown to such strength in the spirit that they became known, even by their enemies, as "those who have turned the world upside down."

And that's just what they did. A small group of first century men and women had committed themselves so totally, so completely to Jesus Christ, that the impact of their faith and faithfulness transformed much of the known world. As a result of that radical transformation, millions upon millions of people around the world today call themselves Christians.

But there is still turmoil around the table today, as there has always been, the growing number of denominations that make up the Christian Church is surely sufficient evidence of that fact. Christians will never organize their churches all in the same way. They will never worship God all in the same way. They

will never even all believe precisely the same things. But Christian unity transcends all these differences and joins people together in love.

The cause of Christian unity at the present time, and indeed all through history, has been injured and hindered because people have loved their own ecclesiastical organizations, their own creeds, their own ritual, more than they loved each other. Only love implanted in people's hearts by God can tear down the barriers which have been erected between ourselves and our denominations. Jesus said that the mark of true Christian discipleship should be love for one another. And he said this because he knew that only in this way would the world believe and know the truth about him.

Why should those of other religions be persuaded about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ when faced with such a torn and divided church? How can the agnostic or atheist believe in the reality of God? It is only when we love one another, that "God abides in us."

So what do we do? How do we begin to break down some of the barriers that exist between the churches in our own area?

Well I think just praying together and working together is a really good start, because in doing this we learned to rely on one another as we fix our minds on common objectives.

Looking at our giftbox again, you'll notice how it's covered with pictures of all sorts of twigs and leaves you could easily find in a forest, filled with trees that have the common objective of staying alive. In the article "What Good Is a Tree?" in Reader's Digest, it's explained that when the roots of trees touch, there is a substance present that reduces competition. In fact, this unknown fungus helps link roots of different trees -- even of dissimilar species. A whole forest may be linked together. If one tree has access to water, another to nutrients, and a third to sunlight, the trees have the means to share with one another.

Like trees in a forest, Christians always need to support one another, as we look forward to the day when God's kingdom arrives in its fullness, (take out the cross) because of Christ's death on the cross, followed by his, burial, resurrection and ascension; a day when we will be standing shoulder to shoulder with people from other denominations, nations, races and experiences; a day when we will be free to reach out across denominational and other barriers and join hands with those who, like us, believe in Christ and desire to serve him. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.