



Dear Friends,

Oh Happy Day! We'll soon be together again!

Following recent federal and cantonal authorities' decisions to allow the resumption of religious services, the churchwardens and I are now fully engaged preparing to reopen the church on **Sunday 31 May** - two weeks earlier than anticipated. *Hooray!*

Despite a range of stringent mandatory measures that will be in place it will be a great day for our community. And by happy coincidence the 31 May is one of Christianity's great festivals - Pentecost - widely regarded as the birthday of the Church. So after weeks of seemingly endless self-isolation there could not be a better day to reopen the church and welcome you back.

As we reopen I know you will understand that there can be no immediate return to pre-pandemic conditions. That is still a long way off. Covid-19 has not gone away, so we must remain mindful of the potential risks of a second wave of the virus. We are being reminded of this by every authority ahead of our reopening phase, and rightly so.

Our primary concern is everyone's safety and wellbeing. To facilitate this, Brian and Francesco have drawn up a set of policies to ensure we adhere to the measures decreed by the civic authorities. Sifting through a mix of ever-changing regulations has not been easy, but they have produced what I believe is a workable solution as we journey through the 'new normal' of church life. We owe them our sincerest thanks and gratitude for their professional and meticulous work on this.

We are still waiting to receive the latest set of guidelines from Bishop's Council, which should arrive early next week. When it does it will ensure we are compliant with the Church of England rulings on restarting worship in church. And it is only at that point will I ask Brian to publish our reopening policies on our website. So do remember to check the home page for an important update mid-week.

One thing we have learned in this process is that one size does not fit all churches. Every community is different in size, building and membership. What works for say a big cathedral is just unworkable in a smaller community like ours. You may also like to know that some chaplaincies in our diocese have decided to wait until the long lists of mandatory safety measures are less demanding. But we decided to push on and aim for Pentecost Sunday. I am in doubt you will applaud that decision.

For now though you have another homily to listen to ☺ My theme this week is the *Ascension of our Lord* based on readings from Acts of the Apostles and St Matthew's Gospel. Jesus' Ascension was a defining moment for the fledgling Christian community and signalled the start of a whole new era for the Church. I hope you find it helpful.

With every good wish and blessing.

Fr Nigel
24/05/20

Prayers for Easter 7



Collect for the Sunday after Ascension Day

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.

Intercessions

You are free, Lord,
your Ascension has set you free:
free from the constraints of human existence,
outside the limitations of time and space;
free to be here with us now,
in our worship and fellowship;
and free to be with us always;
for in your freedom
you have bound yourself to us with a promise:

Bidding: Lord, we are always with you;
Response: **even to the end of time.**

We pray, Lord, for those
who need to feel you close,
who need the assurance of your love,
the encouragement of your Spirit.

Bidding: Lord, we are always with you;
Response: **even to the end of time.**

We pray for those who are persecuted,
who are discriminated against,
who are mocked because of their faith or race or colour.

Bidding: Lord, we are always with you;
Response: **even to the end of time.**

We pray for those who are destitute,
who are hungry, who are refugees,
because of the selfishness and apathy of the world.

Bidding: Lord, we are always with you;
Response: **even to the end of time.**

We pray at this time of financial turmoil,
for those who have lost jobs,
those who struggle to pay bills,
and those who have the power to affect positive change.

Bidding: Lord, we are always with you;
Response: **even to the end of time.**

We pray for those who are feeling fed up,
who are in discomfort, who are afraid
because they are ill in body, mind or spirit.
We especially hold before those from our own community
in need of your help at this time...

*Sandy, Sam, Pierre, Roy, Shirleen, Sarah, Lorelle,
Phoebe, Christoph, Wayne, Helen and Aydan.*

Give them as well others known to us,
courage and hope and the knowledge
that you are present in their time of need.

Bidding: Lord, we are always with you;
Response: **even to the end of time.**

Be with us all, Lord,
in all our daily struggles as we seek to follow you.
Be with us all, Lord, in our periods of doubt and hesitation,
and in our times of happiness, health and loving.
Be with us until that time when in your kingdom of love
our joy will know no end.

Bidding: Lord, we are always with you;
Response: **even to the end of time.**

In a moment of silence offer your own thoughts and prayers ending with...

Lord, be with us in all our prayers,
and direct our way toward the attainment of salvation,
that among the changes and chances of this mortal life,
we may always be defended by your gracious help;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's 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
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Blessing

Rejoice this day, for Christ has ascended into heaven.
Christ has opened the gate of glory.
Christ ever prays for us at the right hand of the Father.
Christ descended to lift us up to be with him.
And the blessing of God almighty, the Father,
the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be with you always.

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

