

A few words about our readings

Acts 2.42-end This passage is a summary of the communal life of the early church. It contains the four main aspects of that life which is also ours today. It is nourished by the apostles' teaching, it maintains a spirit of community, it shows care and solidarity for each member, it meets to pray and to worship God. Even in this time of self-isolation all these hold good if we remain in contact with each other as a church community.

1 Peter 2.19-end Peter is writing to Christians who have to endure the persecution of their pagan neighbours. In many ways we also have to endure persecution from the society we live in and it is sometimes difficult to maintain our faith, although we live in comparative freedom from the worst aspects of persecution. Peter invites us to accept our sufferings knowing that Christ has suffered for us. By his wounds we have been healed. Lastly, Peter reminds us that *we are like sheep who have gone astray and have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of our souls.*

John 10.1-10 Jesus had healed the man who was blind from birth and had had to contend with the pharisees who challenged the man himself. When Jesus now speaks of thieves and bandits, he is referring to them. In contrast Jesus speaks of his role both as shepherd and figuratively as the gate of the sheepfold. The Palestinian shepherd knows his sheep and they know him, they know his voice and will follow him out of the fold. Jesus is the gate to the fold through which the sheep pass. Thieves and bandits take another route. Our way to God is through Jesus and he is the one who calls to us and leads through all the dangers which we face on our way. Listen to his voice! He has come to give us abundant life.

The Hymn 'In heavenly love abiding' has this verse:

Wherever He may guide me, no want shall turn me back.

My shepherd is beside me, and nothing can I lack.

His wisdom ever waking, His sight is never dim.

He knows the way He's taking, and I will walk with Him.

The need for shepherds or pastors in the Church is the same today as always and it is no coincidence that this Sunday is **Vocations Sunday**. Please pray that men and women might continue to hear God's call to ministry.

One pastor who is sadly no longer with us is the Revd. Patrick Coghlan who presided and preached at our Parish Eucharist on February 16th and spoke about caring for God's creation. Patrick died from the virus last week. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Prayers for 03.05.20

In last week's bulletin we talked about praying in any place and at any time and God will hear us. Prayers come in all shapes and sizes – they can be poems, sung, said out loud or whispered privately. It doesn't matter – prayer is a personal thing.

This week let's think about the prayer which most of us know off by heart and which always features in our services – the Lord's Prayer. You can read about Jesus telling us how to pray in Matthew 6 v 9-13. Perhaps if you have a bible at home or access to the internet you could look those verses up and then humbly pray those wonderful words Jesus gave us:

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 them that 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

Whilst it's important to know where the Lord's Prayer "comes from", it's equally important to realise that this prayer we say so often is relevant to every aspect of our lives – and never more so than during this lock down. Jesus walks with us through the good and the bad and understands all that we, his people are going through.

It's over 2,000 years since Jesus gave these words to his first disciples – we are still his disciples and the prayer is just as relevant and helpful to us now.

And we pray for the recently departed Maureen Jackson, Eric Lill, Christine Luckock and Colin Scott. We also pray for those in our memorial book whose anniversary occurs this week: John W Dowse, Mary Fox, Frank Green, Nellie Quinn, Keith Powell Robinson and Brenda Dorothy Young.