



Connection

Sunday 24th January 2021
Third Sunday of Epiphany



View from a Vicarage

Welcome once again to the latest edition of the Bredon Hill Group Connection. I do hope that you are enjoying, and finding useful, this short publication, and that it supports you as we journey together through this current Lockdown.

This week the Bredon Hill Group Forum has met and started to look at what may be possible in terms of worship and services for Lent, Holy Week and Easter; And in the next couple of weeks when Parochial Church Councils have had a chance to discuss this further, we will be updating you on what has been agreed. Much of this will be dependent on what happens following any government announcements in mid-February, and any potential decision by them to make changes to the current national Lockdown restrictions.

The current thinking is that although we will probably not be able to have any physical services on Ash Wednesday, we will offer a Zoom service to include some form of the imposition of ashes; Also, that we may be able to have a reduced level of physical communal worship across the Hill for Good Friday and Easter Sunday. We further hope to be able to offer a Lent Study Course which will be held on Zoom, and a series of Zoom services of Reflections and Compline from Monday to Thursday during Holy Week.

Sadly, given the high level of risk of spreading the Corona Virus, we will have to accept that our normal pattern of worship and study for the Lent and Easter season will not be all we may have wished and hoped for this year. However, as more people are vaccinated, we do hope we will be able to at least have some opportunity of celebrating this special time in our Churches year physically together, albeit that this will be somewhat limited. Let's pray that this is the last year we will be affected in this way, and that in 2022 we will be able to hold our usual Lent and Easter services and activities.

This next week on Thursday in the churches lectionary we remember the priest, teacher of the faith and philosopher, Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274). Aquinas was an Italian Dominican friar and immensely influential in philosophy and natural theology arguing that reason is found in God. Thomas embraced several ideas put forward by Aristotle - whom he called "the Philosopher, and his influence on Western thought is considerable, for much of our modern philosophy either developed or opposed his ideas, particularly in the areas of ethics, natural law, natural law, metaphysics and political theory. The English philosopher Anthony Kenny considers Aquinas to be "one of the dozen greatest philosophers of the western world".

Among his many works Aquinas is distinguished for his eucharistic hymns, which form part of the Church's liturgy, and the Catholic church honours Aquinas as a saint, regarding him as the model teacher for those studying for the priesthood.

Therefore, this week, I thought it appropriate to include a couple of quotations from Thomas Aquinas, which you may wish to reflect on as we commemorate Aquinas' contribution to our philosophical and theological life:-

"Three things are necessary for the salvation of man: to know what he ought to believe, to know what he ought to desire, and to know what he ought to do".

"Sheer joy is God's, and this demands companionship".

"If you are looking for the way by which you should go, take Christ, for he is Himself the way".

In these quotations we are pointed towards Christ as being the way in which all our hope of a future eternal life with God exists; And it is only through a close relationship with God that we can experience sheer joy.

So, this week may we once again seek the delight of God's presence in prayer and worship. Therefore, just to remind you, that we offer a Zoom service of Morning Prayer each Sunday morning at 10.30am, and if you would like to join the service please contact Alison Khan and she will send you the Zoom invitation, through which you can either join on your computer or by dialling in on the telephone. (Contact: email acbhteam@gmail.com or telephone 07984 748059).

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity ends on Monday 25 January, but I do encourage you to keep praying for peace, unity, and reconciliation across our world, especially in these challenging times.

We will of course continue to produce the Bredon Hill Connection with Reflections and Intercessions written by people from our different church communities, as well as signposting you to other Diocesan and Church of England worship resources.

So, as I end, I would like to conclude with a prayer by Thomas Aquinas:-

God of all goodness, grant us to desire ardently, to seek wisely, to know surely and to accomplish perfectly, thy holy will, for the glory of thy name. Amen

May God bless you all this week.

Allison

Reverend Allison Davies

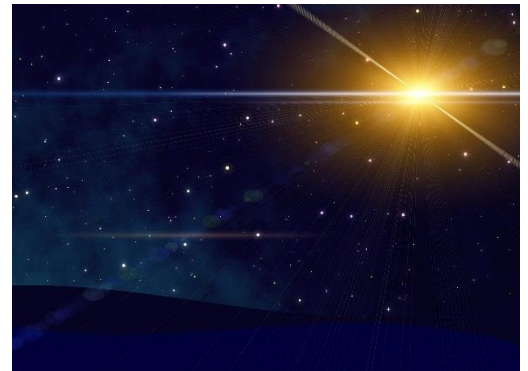
Vicar of Eckington, Defford with Besford and Associate Priest for the churches of the Bredon Hill Group

Service of Holy Communion for the Third Sunday of Epiphany

Collect

Almighty God,
whose Son revealed in signs and miracles
the wonder of your saving presence:
renew your people with your heavenly grace,
and in all our weakness
sustain us by your mighty power;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen



Reading: Revelation 19: 6-10

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God." Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Reading: John 2: 1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Post Communion Prayer

Almighty Father,
whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world:
may your people,
illuminated by your word and sacraments,
shine with the radiance of his glory,
that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed
to the ends of the earth;
for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

Amen

Hymns for the Zoom Service this Sunday

1 Songs of thankfulness and praise,
Jesus, Lord, to you we raise,
manifested by the star
to the sages from afar;
Branch of royal David's stem,
in your birth at Bethlehem;

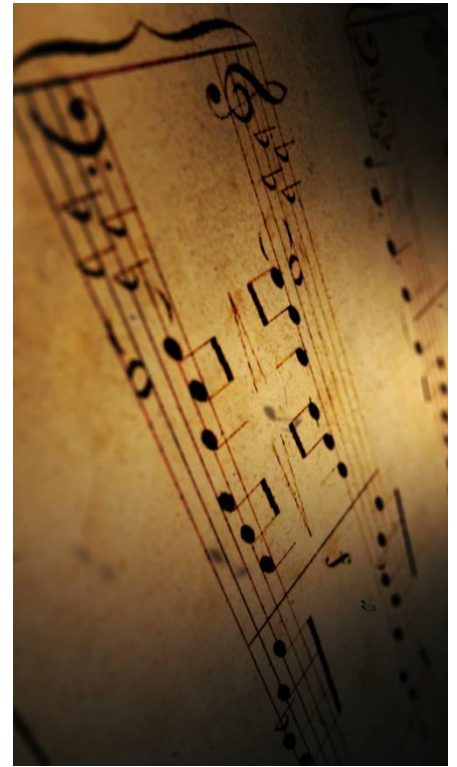
Refrain:

"You are Christ," by us confessed,
God in flesh made manifest.

2 Manifest at Jordan's stream,
Prophet, Priest, and King supreme;
and at Cana, wedding guest,
in your Godhead manifest,
you revealed your pow'r divine,
changing water into wine; [Refrain]

3 Manifest in making whole
palsied limbs and fainting soul;
manifest in valiant fight,
quelling all the devil's might;
manifest in gracious will,
ever bringing good from ill; [Refrain]

Source: [Trinity Psalter Hymnal #332](#)



1 Christ triumphant, ever reigning,
Saviour, Master, King!
Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining,
hear us as we sing:
Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name.

2 Word incarnate, truth revealing,
Son of Man on earth!
power and majesty concealing
by your humble birth:
Yours the glory...

3 Suffering servant, scorned, ill - treated,
victim crucified!
death is through the cross defeated,
sinners justified:
Yours the glory...

4 Priestly king, enthroned for ever
high in heaven above!
sin and death and hell shall never
stifle hymns of love:
Yours the glory...

5 So, our hearts and voices raising
through the ages long,
ceaselessly upon you gazing,
this shall be our song:
Yours the glory...

© Michael Seward/Jubilate Hymns
8 5 8 5 7 9 including Refrain

Reflection for the Third Sunday of Epiphany by Phil Airdrie



We have just been through the time of the year when the media, lacking other uplifting stories, delivers to us a variety of the nation's favourites: whether it is the 100 most popular pieces of music, the top 100 favourite poems or the funniest ever TV sketch. The game is: can we guess which will come out on top and do we agree with the result? I think our gospel reading today must be the all-time most popular of readings at weddings: John chapter 2 verses 1-11. And even if you don't recognise the reference, it won't take you long to guess that this passage is the 'wedding feast at Cana'.

Wedding ceremonies are not usually the time or place to explore a gospel passage, or when an address can give more pressing advice to the happy couple, but there is more to these verses that merits our attention. For a start, where was Cana? Merely asking that question suggests that we really do not know for sure. The point I am making is that the first recorded miracle of Jesus happened at a place that is largely unknown. Not the equivalent of Birmingham or even Worcester, but Bricklehampton or Netherton! Not typically the place you might expect the Son of God to announce his presence to the world.

And what of the miracle? No doubt, like me, you associate the miracles of Jesus principally with some kind of healing. But on this occasion, Jesus changes water into wine to ensure the wedding party, which probably took place over several days, continued to go with a swing in order to save any embarrassment of the hosts!

We also think when Jesus healed someone in other gospel passages there were always crowds of witnesses around to share a blessing and experience of the event. Here? Perhaps a few serving staff and some of his disciples but the vast majority would most likely have been oblivious to the miraculous deed.

The Gospel of John, probably written sixty to seventy years after the event, perhaps gives a deeper meaning to the events in Cana that day. It might represent the change from the old Jewish law of purification by washing with water so that the wine represents the shed blood of Jesus in the New Testament, which we share in our Eucharist. In verse 11 we read that this miracle had a profound effect upon the disciples of Jesus, showing his authority and glory, and enabling them to believe in him.

However, in simple human terms I still find the example of Jesus inspiring. Not the big showy demonstration of good deeds on the national stage, but the backwaters of Cana among ordinary people, whom he wanted to have a good time. I hope we can be encouraged that the small contributions we make for the benefit of others, even though we may not get thanked, will be a blessing for both the giver and the receiver. We may not be able to make every party go with a swing, but if it helps, let us not think ourselves above doing the washing-up.

Prayers for the Third Sunday of Epiphany by Lynette Mantle



Hello God,

Although we live in dark times I want to focus on “Blessings”. So many blessings for the people of our country, and for our friends and neighbours across the world, so thank you God. I am going to list a few of my blessings and I would like everyone to pause, in quietness, for a short time to think of their blessings. I have a roof over my head and sufficient food for my need; my garden is showing signs of life with snowdrops, catkins, grass growing; I have seen bees this week on the warmer days; there have been glorious sunsets although sunrises have been slow; my seeds are all in order ready to sow; my friend, Ali, has returned safely from the Mercy Ship. Now think of your own blessings.

ALL: Thank you God.

Miracles happen even today God. We have the miracle of a vaccine to help us out of dark days and into light. Our government, and others, are working to get us all vaccinated eventually. However, God, our time is not yet come; we must remain patient, take comfort in the fact that you love us and will not fail us, some of us may become very ill or even die but we will survive and the story will be told for hundreds of years. Give us patience to wait our turn for vaccination, to look at the light at the end of the tunnel and know that it gets a little brighter each day. Help us, God, to keep that patience in the knowledge that we must continue isolating to protect our loved ones here at home, and far across the world.

ALL: Thank you God.

There are many needy people. Friends and neighbours who lack in adequate food, shelter, heating. There are people who have no hope here and across the world; people ravaged by war, famine, flood, sickness. Please God, give everyone hope to get us all through hard times. Some of them may only need a kind word: may each one of us, here today, carry that kind word to whomsoever may need it.

ALL: Thank you God.

Let us remember those who are sick and give thanks for our friends who have recovered. God can bring comfort to those who are sad if they let Him in; let us all go out and encourage those who are struggling to let God in. Whilst taking comfort in the presence of God let us take the challenge to sing a joyous song of thanks for the lives of those people we have known and who are no longer here but remain in our hearts always.

ALL: Thank you God.

We are often reminded to celebrate diversity. I am reminded that we share far more similarities. May we all, God, see the similarities in each other, in our neighbour at home and across the world. I am going out to celebrate our similarities and not our differences. As we give thanks for the blessing of vaccines, remember our hour is not yet come and remain patient. In that patience we will be free again and that freedom will allow the sharing of light, joy and hope to reach other countries that need our help.

ALL: Thank you God.

Requests for Prayers

If there is someone or something that you would like to pray for please email us at eckingtonvicarage@hotmail.com



Please continue to pray for the ill and isolated, frontline, hospital and medical staff and for all those who are in any kind of need. Pray for all victims of genocide, and those at risk today in different parts of the world. Pray that God's peace may reign in the hearts of all nations; for reconciliation where there is division and that God's love would overcome hatred and fear.

Those who are sick: Roy and Margaret Putnam, Richard Clements, Christopher Frith, Edward Bunn, Brian Bolam, Alison Edwards, Mari (friend of Lynette Mantle)

We continue to pray for: Don Dufty, Percy and Sharon Blizzard, Jackie Pickford, Clive Hunt,

Those in residential care: Sheila Bigland-Gibbons, Barbara Milton, Rita Sheppy

Those who have died and their families: Geoff Relph, Revd Margie Schutte, Carol Newman, Michael Pilliner, Eileen Fincher, Stephen Jeenes

Anniversary of a death: Please pray for those who have lost loved ones

Church Services during Lockdown



Reverend Allison will be leading Morning Prayer via Zoom at 10.30am this Sunday. If you would like to join the service either by video or dialing in from your telephone; please contact Alison Khan at acbhteam@gmail.com or 07984 748059 who will send you the invite link.

Additional Resources during Lockdown

Even though we are inviting everyone to join our weekly Zoom service at 10.30 on Sunday morning, please be aware that the Freephone Daily Hope programmes of worship services and prayers are still available by ringing 0800 804 8044. This includes a Church of England weekly service (select option 6) and traditional Morning/Evening Prayer (select option 7). This service will not cost the caller anything and provides worship material for those looking for additional services and prayer.

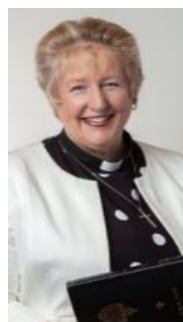
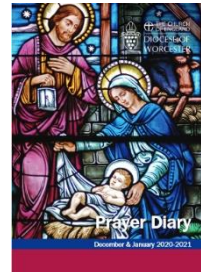


A free phoneline of hymns, reflections and prayers



News from the Diocese

Prayers and diocesan news can be found at www.cofe-worcester.org.uk



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