



**Sunday, 21 June, 2020**

***Trinity 2***

At last, some good news. Churches and other places of worship are able to open for private prayer! Sadly, it's not simply a question of throwing open the doors and crying "Welcome!" All sorts of safety measures have to be put in place first – but at least we are making progress. For details of what stage each of our churches has reached, please see the notices.

Within our communities, levels of isolation and loneliness are hopefully slightly reduced as the rules relax and small gatherings outside are permitted. Nonetheless, please do remain vigilant to the needs of those around you and continue to offer the help and support that so many of you have so generously provided.

*Sarah.*

## **Collect and Readings for Trinity 2**

Lord, you have taught us  
that all our doings without love are nothing worth;  
send your Holy Spirit  
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love,  
the true bond of peace and of all virtues,  
without which whoever lives is counted dead before you.  
Grant this for your only son Jesus Christ's sake,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

### ***First Reading (Genesis 21: 8-21)***

The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac." The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for

it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.” So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, “Do not let me look on the death of the child.” And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.” Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

## ***Second Reading (Romans 6: 1b-11)***

Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

***Gospel Reading (Matthew 10: 24-39)***

“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

“So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,  
and a daughter against her mother,

and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;  
and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

## Reflection for the Second Sunday after Trinity

*Sarah Cottrill*

I hope you all noticed that our Old Testament reading contains one of the wisest and most important verses in the Bible. If you missed it, go back to Genesis 21, 12b. I particularly urge my mother and Phil Bradford to read, mark and inwardly digest: *Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you!*

But what is the background and original context of these wise words?

As was customary, Abraham gave a great feast to mark the day on which his son was weaned which was around the time that he was three. The feast celebrated the boy's transition from infancy to childhood. During this feast, we are told that Sarah saw the son of Abraham and his Egyptian slave Hagar "playing with her son Isaac" and demanded that both Hagar and her son were banished. This may seem an unreasonable reaction until we realise that the word translated here as *playing with* may also be read as meaning *making fun of*, and then every parent will be able to sympathise, to an extent, with Sarah. No parent likes to see their child being made fun of and will jump to their defense. Even then, Sarah's reaction may seem extreme until we realise that it was all in keeping with God's plan. The two

boys had to be separated so that each could be the founder of a nation. Isaac, the child born from a promise made by God, was the chosen one, but this did not mean that God abandoned Hagar and her son. On the contrary, he provided for them and, in due time, fulfilled the promise he made to Abraham that this son too, would become a nation.

Over the course of her life, Hagar suffered many hardships and difficulties, few of which were of her own making. Rather it was a lapse of faith and acts of disobedience on Abraham's part that caused her suffering. So, we must ask ourselves: how often are the consequences of our own actions borne by others?

Hagar, as Abraham's slave, had to submit herself to his wife's will. That was the nature of slavery; slaves were the lowest in society and yet in our Gospel reading, we find Jesus telling his disciples that a slave is not greater than their master. Surely this is stating the obvious and it would be better to say, as indeed he does elsewhere, that the masters are not greater than the slaves. (He famously and poignantly demonstrates this in the washing of the disciples' feet on Maundy Thursday). Stop and think a moment though; He's also just said that the disciple is not greater than the teacher and if we apply this to ourselves in our Christian service, we must ask the question: do we

sometimes get carried away with our own importance and forget the one for whom we act? It is easy – and only human – to sometimes be so busy “for The Church” that we believe ourselves to be indispensable; to become complaisant about our own spiritual needs and discipleship and forget to stop being Martha and become Mary, with time to sit at the feet of Christ and listen. We all unconsciously start putting ourselves above God. We need to form the discipline of regularly stopping to think, and to pray for the humility to remember that we need God; he doesn’t need us! The only one who is indispensable to God’s Church is God himself! That is not to say that we shouldn’t be working for God, his Church and his world, of course we should. But we do need to remember who we serve and not turn our service into opportunities to boost our own egos.

Nonetheless, we must also never forget that we are precious in God’s eyes. However worthless we may sometimes feel when facing failure or great difficulties, we are *not* worthless; Christ considered us worth dying for and God values us highly. Jesus tells us that no sparrow dies unnoticed by God and we “are of more value than many sparrows.” Each one of us is personally loved and valued by God and this knowledge should sustain and comfort us and give us courage to face difficulties when they arise. And

arise they certainly will! Jesus has some uncomfortable things to say about what those who truly seek to serve and follow him can expect. He warns that it will cause divisions within families; that he must be put before and above all worldly concerns and relationships; that followers must “take up their cross” – a graphic illusion to the potential ultimate price to be paid. And yet, against all this, comes the promise of reward beyond our imagining. We will be acknowledged by Jesus before God and we will “find life” – being with Christ through eternity.

Of course, not all of our difficulties are the result of trying to faithfully follow and serve Christ. In truth, for most of us, very few, if any, problems come from this. Our difficulties are more likely to appear in issues surrounding our relationships, health, jobs, lifestyle choices – all of which may seem remote from our faith and religious beliefs. Except they’re not. Every decision we make, every action we take in every sphere of our life is – or should be – influenced by, and reflect, our religious beliefs. Christianity is not something we “do on Sunday.” It infiltrates every aspect of our life and should be constantly and consistently demonstrated. This is what it means to truly follow Jesus, and this is what we are called to do.

**Collect and readings for St Alban,  
first martyr of Britain. (June 22<sup>nd</sup>)**

Eternal Father,  
When the gospel of Christ first came to our land  
you gloriously confirmed the faith of Alban  
by making him the first to win a martyr's crown;  
grant that, following his example,  
in the fellowship of the saints  
we may worship you, the living God,  
and give true witness to Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord.  
Amen.

**First Reading (Wisdom 3:1-3)**

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,  
and no torment will ever touch them.  
In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died,  
and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their  
going from us to be their destruction;  
but they are at peace.

**Second Reading (2 Timothy 2:3-13)**

Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer. And in the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules. It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel, for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. The saying is sure:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him;  
if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—  
for he cannot deny himself.

### **Gospel (John 12:24 – 26)**

(Jesus said) Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

### **Collect and Readings for The Birth of John The Baptist. (June 24<sup>th</sup>)**

Almighty God,  
by whose providence your servant John the Baptist  
was wonderfully born,  
and sent to prepare the way of your Son our Saviour  
by the preaching of repentance;  
lead us to repent according to his preaching  
and, after his example,  
constantly to speak the truth, boldly to rebuke vice,  
and patiently to suffer for the truth's sake;  
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.

### **First reading (Isaiah 40:1-11)**

Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every  
valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.  
Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,  
their constancy is like the flower of the field.  
The grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;

surely the people are grass.  
The grass withers, the flower fades;  
but the word of our God will stand forever.

Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good tidings;  
lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,<sup>[b]</sup>  
lift it up, do not fear;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
“Here is your God!” See, the Lord GOD comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.  
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms,  
and carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead the mother sheep.

### **Second Reading (Acts 13:14b-26).**

on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent them a message, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the

people, give it.” So Paul stood up and with a gesture began to speak:

“You Israelites and others who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. For about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. After he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance for about four hundred fifty years. After that he gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. Then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. When he had removed him, he made David their king. In his testimony about him he said, ‘I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes.’ Of this man’s posterity God has brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus, as he promised; before his coming John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his work, he said, ‘What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but one is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of the sandals on his feet.’

“My brothers, you descendants of Abraham’s family, and others who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent.

## **Gospel (Luke 1:57-66 & 80)**

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. Fear came over all their neighbours, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

## **Notices**

### **Zoom Service for St John's Patronal**

There will be another Zoom service for St John's Patronal, at 7.15pm on Wednesday, 24 June. This is for everyone in the Group; it just happens to be the first (and perhaps, we can hope, the last) Patronal to fall during lockdown. If you would like to take part, please let Phil know so you can receive an invitation.

### **St Clement's Virtual Fundraiser**

20 June should have been St Clement's Summer Fayre. Obviously that can no longer go ahead so instead we're inviting you to some 'Virtual events'.

The main of these is a virtual Quiz Night, to be held on Saturday, 4 July at 7.30pm. This is open to all (teams of no more than 4, bring your own drinks and nibbles!), but you will need to let Sarah know in advance so you can receive a Zoom invitation to participate. Cost is £1 per person.

At the quiz, we will also be drawing the winning tickets from our virtual raffle. To enter this, please contact Sarah and say how many tickets, at 50p each, you would like to buy. Your name will be written on the corresponding number of pieces

of paper which will go into a hat and drawn in the usual way. Prizes will be delivered. Payment for quiz entry and raffle tickets can be made by cheque, payable to St Clements PCC and either dropped into church or posted to Sarah to pass on to Sheila.

Also on July 4<sup>th</sup>, Weather permitting, there will be a table outside St Clements Church from 10.00 – 2.00 with a variety of items for sale, on a donations basis. Meanwhile, we are also inviting people who would normally have attended our fayre, to consider how much they would have spent there, and donating that amount of money to the church. Thank you for your support.

*Sarah.*

### **Update on church opening.**

**Saint Michael's** is now open for private prayer from 10.00am -12.00 noon on Thursdays.

**Saint Clement's** is working towards being able to open in the near future. Sanitisers etc have been bought and we are arranging for the church to be thoroughly cleaned.

**Saint John's** is also working towards opening and we are waiting for the arrival of some sanitiser.

**Saint David's** has no plans for opening at the moment.

### **Important Numbers**

Childline	0800 1111
Samaritans	116 123
Domestic Violence Hotline	0808 2000 247
The Survivors Trust	0808 801 0181
Mind	0300 123 3393
Age UK	0800 169 6565

### **Resources**

A reminder of our online presence.

St John's Website	<a href="http://www.stjohninbedwardine.co.uk">www.stjohninbedwardine.co.uk</a>
St Michael's Website	<a href="http://stmichaels.westworcesterchurches.org.uk">stmichaels.westworcesterchurches.org.uk</a>
St John's Facebook	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/stjohninbedwardine">www.facebook.com/stjohninbedwardine</a>
St Michael's Facebook	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/stmichaelsdinesgreen">www.facebook.com/stmichaelsdinesgreen</a>