



Parish of St. Mary's Swynnerton & St. James' Cotes Heath  
 Sunday November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020 (Christ the King)  
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Christ the King Sunday concludes the Christian year with a celebration that focuses on Christ as glorified Lord and King. The festival also deepens awareness of the final end of all things in the triumph of Christ: it brings the cycle of the church's year to an end, but looks forward to its turning again on Advent Sunday.



Many of us will also know this as "Stir-up Sunday" which gets its name from the beginning of the collect for the day in the Book of Common Prayer, "Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people". Tradition has it that in Victorian times the family would gather five weeks before Christmas to stir the Christmas pudding.

St. Luke's congregation are aiming to make their village brighter by creating stars for the Advent season. Some people are knitting, Graham Sherratt is producing wooden stars for children to decorate and put in their garden and Freda Bishop has designed these rustic examples for windows or hanging outside. Let us know if you manage to make one of these or if you have your own ideas for Christmas preparations in this very different year. "Let light shine out of darkness".



*The former Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks, showed in his writings how the divine could provide us with light in times of the greatest darkness. "It is not about optimism", he wrote, "but about courage, the courage to face an unknown future knowing that we are not alone, that God is with us, lifting us when we fall, signalling the way."*  
*On a lighter note, Rabbi Sacks became good friends with the former Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey through a passion for Arsenal football club. Both were invited to Highbury to watch a midweek match. But as he recalled, the presence of two men with an assumed hotline to heaven did nothing for Arsenal's chances that night. "Arsenal went down to their worst home defeat in 63 years, losing 6-2 to Manchester United. The next day a national paper carried the story in its diary column, and concluded: 'If the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chief Rabbi between them cannot bring about a win for Arsenal, does this not finally prove that God does not exist!' The day after, I sent them the following reply: 'To the contrary, what it proves is that God exists. It's just that He supports Manchester United.'"*



**SPIRITUAL EXERCISES:** Ann Ramsey sends this idea for days when you're feeling a bit fed up or having trouble sleeping. "It's a good way to use our brains, and also use your spiritual mind ....

Starting with the letter A, think of a word that would fit how we see God. For example:  
 A. Almighty, B. Beautiful C. Counsellor.

Then carry on thinking of words through the alphabet.

If you can't think of any, look at a hymn or a verse of scripture and you will be bound to find a word there. I hope you enjoy doing this as much as I do."

It's good to hear that Dot Sergeant is happily settled into life at Oulton Abbey Care Home. It's not possible to visit at the moment but friends have photos of her playing boules and showing the other residents how to dance!



## The Gospel reading for this Sunday is Matthew 25:31-46

*“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’*

*“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*



When I read this passage, I thought how appropriate it is today. As soon as the first lockdown started, people from all sorts of organisations, as well as local authorities, searched out the lonely and vulnerable. People even formed new groups to run errands and help with shopping. Neighbours checked out each other, regular phone calls were made to those alone and even supermarkets made special arrangements for the vulnerable to shop safely.

This pandemic has been dreadful for so many: illness, death, unemployment, business collapses, cancelled exams, to name but a few of the calamities. But one ray of sunshine in all of this has been the emergence of so much good will and convergence of people wanting to help, now including willing volunteers to test the new vaccines.

In Matthew chapter 25, Jesus has the expectation that those he gathers around him in Heaven would have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, etc. Yet these virtues are not limited to Christians. Folk of all faiths or none have followed what I think is this natural instinct to help their fellow brothers and sisters.

So, what makes Christians different? Well when it comes to separating the goats from the sheep, we all want to be with the sheep, at Christ's right hand. It would appear that one qualification is to be humanitarians and social workers earning our reward in Heaven by good deeds! However, when we consider how inferior we are to God's majesty, how could we ever earn enough points to get that entrance ticket to Heaven? The answer is in the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross, paying the debt we can't ever achieve ourselves. He paid that ticket price for us. So, we don't help others to promote ourselves, but rather because we are followers of Christ, keen to follow his example and teaching and accepting him as our redeemer. It's sufficient reward to know that what we do for others we are also doing for the God we love, and that Christ has made ready for us a place in Heaven. **Chris Stokes.**

**“To give, and not to count the cost  
to fight, and not to heed the wounds,  
to toil, and not to seek for rest,  
to labour, and not to ask for any reward,  
save that of knowing that we do thy will”**

St. Ignatius of Loyola

Please pray this week for Richard Wenger, Fr. Paul Chavasse, Elaine Dulson as she recovers from surgery, Wendy Jackson and Paul Bell, Dot Sergeant, Pat Barley, Pat Lawrence, Carol & Martyn Turner, Geoff & Linda Foster, Margaret Bailey, Margaret Farr, Kay Bickerton and the Goacher family as they prepare for the funeral of Jonquil's father Gordon Lambert.

WORSHIP FOR CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY

Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven.

**O come, let us sing to the Lord;  
let us heartily rejoice in the rock of our salvation.  
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving  
and be glad in him with psalms.  
For the Lord is a great God  
and a great king above all gods.  
In his hand are the depths of the earth  
and the heights of the mountains are his also.  
The sea is his, for he made it,  
and his hands have moulded the dry land.  
Come, let us worship and bow down  
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.  
For he is our God; we are the people of his pasture  
and the sheep of his hand.  
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be  
for ever. Amen.**

*Confession:* Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' So let us turn away from sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

The kingdom is yours,  
but we turn away from your just rule:  
Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**  
The power is yours,  
but we trust in our own power and strength:  
Christ, have mercy.  
**Christ, have mercy.**  
The glory is yours,  
but we fall short of the glory of God:  
Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

*Creed:* **We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family  
in heaven and on earth is named.  
We believe in God the Son,  
who lives in our hearts through faith,  
and fills us with his love.  
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,  
who strengthens us  
with power from on high.  
We believe in one God;  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.**



**Collect: God the Father,  
help us to hear the call of Christ the King  
and to follow in his service,  
whose kingdom has no end;  
for he reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, one glory.  
Amen.**

Living God, teach us that we need others just as they need us, and so may discharge our responsibilities faithfully within the great company of your people, to the glory of your name.

We pray for nation that is divided against nation, for people that are not at peace with their neighbours: For places of discord and dissatisfaction as in the Middle East and the Balkans.

Lord let us be thankful to our scientists for developing the Covid-19 vaccine.  
May the current results and tests be the solution.  
We pray for those families who have lost loved ones to the pandemic and that you Lord will bring them peace.

We pray that our politicians continue to work for a satisfactory conclusion to the Brexit negotiations.  
Let us also pray that everyone benefits in the long term.

Lord, support those who due to current circumstances have and will accrue financial debt.  
Ensure the financial institutions are fair and patient.

Living God, we thank you that, however great we think we are, we have scarcely begun to understand the fullness of your gift in Christ. **Amen.**

**Stir up, O Lord,  
the wills of your faithful people;  
that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works,  
may by you be plenteously rewarded;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

Our Father ....

**Christ our King make us faithful and strong to do his will,  
that we may reign with him in glory;  
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father,  
the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon us and remain  
with us for ever. Amen**

*Thanks to Gwyn Williams for this week's prayers.*