

IN TOUCH

Parish Website: www.worthabbeyparish.co.uk

27th/ 28th May 2017

The Ascension of The Lord (A)

No: 1095

Guard your lips from harmful or deceptive speech. Prefer moderation in speech and speak no foolish chatter, nothing just to provoke laughter (Rule of St Benedict 4: 51-53)

Fr Paul writes:

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Ascension. In an older form of the liturgy, this was marked by the extinguishing of the Paschal candle during mass, thus signifying the end of the period of forty days which, according to Luke's scheme, marked the time of Jesus' appearances to his disciples. (It is significant that St Paul did not share in these appearances.) Today, we no longer extinguish the candle, as this can give the impression that the feast is about Jesus' leaving us, his absence. In fact, of course, it is not about his absence, but about his triumph, and, as such, forms an equal part with the celebration of Easter. Both feasts celebrate his exaltation, but using different symbolism. At Easter we speak of Jesus' triumph over death, and his return from the place of the dead; at the Ascension, we speak of his triumph over hostile spiritual powers – anything which might separate us from God – and his going up to heaven to share his Father's reign. In our second reading today, we hear : *God raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand, in heaven ...He has put all things under his feet.* (Ephesians 1.20-23) Our celebration reminds us this that is all for our sake : *Where the Head has gone before in glory, the Body is called to follow in hope.* (Collect of the day) Elsewhere in the letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes : *God raised us up with Jesus, and gave us a place with him in heaven.* (2.6) In the earliest Christian liturgy the entire period of fifty days from Easter to Pentecost was regarded as one 'great Sunday', a continuous celebration of the triumph of Jesus. Later, the liturgy adopted Luke's chronology – he is the only New Testament author who distinguishes the Ascension from the Resurrection – and divided the time, distinguishing Easter, Ascension and Pentecost. Today's feast leads into Pentecost, which we celebrate next weekend, by emphasising that Jesus sends the Holy Spirit from his place 'at God's right hand', sharing in the power and authority of the Father.

Luke's account shows that the days before Pentecost were a moment of intense prayer, and today we are invited by Archbishop Vincent Nichols to join an ecumenical 'chain of prayer'. We are offered resources to pray as a Church, as a family and as an individual, asking God to send us again His Holy Spirit of love. Please see below, and on the website.

"Thy Kingdom Come": Praying for Evangelisation between Ascension and Pentecost

It has been a long standing tradition in the Catholic Church to pray that those we love, those we meet and all people come to respond to Jesus. This year, each person, prayer group and community is asked to pray particularly between the Ascension and Pentecost, for the Holy Spirit to inspire people to turn to God, as we pray: "Thy Kingdom Come".

Message of Pope Francis for World Communications Day:

As has become the tradition, on the Feast of St. Francis de Sales the Holy Father publishes a Message for World Communications Day, celebrated on the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord.

This year's theme is "*Fear not, for I am with you*" (Is 43.5) Communicating Hope and Trust in our Time".

Access to the media – thanks to technological progress – makes it possible for countless people to share news instantly and spread it widely. That news may be good or bad, true or false. The early Christians compared the human mind to a constantly grinding millstone; it is up to the miller to determine what it will grind: good wheat or worthless weeds. Our minds are always "grinding", but it is up to us to choose what to feed them (cf. SAINT JOHN CASSIAN, Epistle to Leontius).

I wish to address this message to all those who, whether in their professional work or personal relationships, are like that mill, daily "grinding out" information with the aim of providing rich fare for those with whom they communicate. I would like to encourage everyone to engage in constructive forms of communication that reject prejudice towards others and foster a culture of encounter, helping all of us to view the world around us with realism and trust.

I am convinced that we have to break the vicious circle of anxiety and stem the spiral of fear resulting from a constant focus on "bad news" (wars, terrorism, scandals and all sorts of human failure). This has nothing to do with spreading misinformation that would ignore the tragedy of human suffering, nor is it about a naive optimism blind to the scandal of evil.

Rather, I propose that all of us work at overcoming that feeling of growing discontent and resignation that can at times generate apathy, fear or the idea that evil has no limits. Moreover, in a communications industry which thinks that good news does not sell, and where the tragedy of human suffering and the mystery of evil easily turn into entertainment, there is always the temptation that our consciences can be dulled or slip into pessimism.

I would like, then, to contribute to the search for an open and creative style of communication that never seeks to glamourize evil but instead to concentrate on solutions and to inspire a positive and responsible approach on the part of its recipients. I ask everyone to offer the people of our time storylines that are at heart “good news”.

Good news Life is not simply a bare succession of events, but a history, a story waiting to be told through the choice of an interpretative lens that can select and gather the most relevant data. In and of itself, reality has no one clear meaning. Everything depends on the way we look at things, on the lens we use to view them. If we change that lens, reality itself appears different. So how can we begin to “read” reality through the right lens?

For us Christians, that lens can only be the good news, beginning with the Good News par excellence: “the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God” (Mk 1:1). With these words, Saint Mark opens his Gospel not by relating “good news” about Jesus, but rather the good news that is Jesus himself. Indeed, reading the pages of his Gospel, we learn that its title corresponds to its content and, above all else, this content is the very person of Jesus.

This good news – Jesus himself – is not good because it has nothing to do with suffering, but rather because suffering itself becomes part of a bigger picture. It is seen as an integral part of Jesus’ love for the Father and for all mankind. In Christ, God has shown his solidarity with every human situation. He has told us that we are not alone, for we have a Father who is constantly mindful of his children. “Fear not, for I am with you” (Is 43:5): these are the comforting words of a God who is immersed in the history of his people. In his beloved Son, this divine promise – “I am with you” – embraces all our weakness, even to dying our death. In Christ, even darkness and death become a point of encounter with Light and Life. Hope is born, a hope accessible to everyone, at the very crossroads where life meets the bitterness of failure. That hope does not disappoint, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5) and makes new life blossom, like a shoot that springs up from the fallen seed. Seen in this light, every new tragedy that occurs in the world’s history can also become a setting for good news, inasmuch as love can find a way to draw near and to raise up sympathetic hearts, resolute faces and hands ready to build anew.

Confidence in the seed of the Kingdom To introduce his disciples and the crowds to this Gospel mindset and to give them the right “lens” needed to see and embrace the love that dies and rises, Jesus uses parables. He frequently compares the Kingdom of God to a seed that releases its potential for life precisely when it falls to the earth and dies (cf. Mk 4:1-34). This use of images and metaphors to convey the quiet power of the Kingdom does not detract from its importance and urgency; rather, it is a merciful way of making space for the listener to freely accept and appropriate that power. It is also a most effective way to express the immense dignity of the Paschal mystery, leaving it to images, rather than concepts, to communicate the paradoxical beauty of new life in Christ. In that life, hardship and the cross do not obstruct, but bring about God’s salvation; weakness proves stronger than any human power; and failure can be the prelude to the fulfilment of all things in love. This is how hope in the Kingdom of God matures and deepens: it is “as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow” (Mk 4:26-27).

The Kingdom of God is already present in our midst, like a seed that is easily overlooked, yet silently takes root. Those to whom the Holy Spirit grants keen vision can see it blossoming. They do not let themselves be robbed of the joy of the Kingdom by the weeds that spring up all about.

The horizons of the Spirit Our hope based on the good news which is Jesus himself makes us lift up our eyes to contemplate the Lord in the liturgical celebration of the Ascension. Even though the Lord may now appear more distant, the horizons of hope expand all the more. In Christ, who brings our human nature to heaven, every man and woman can now freely “enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh” (Heb 10:19-20). By “the power of the Holy Spirit” we can be witnesses and “communicators” of a new and redeemed humanity “even to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:7-8).

Confidence in the seed of God’s Kingdom and in the mystery of Easter should also shape the way we communicate. This confidence enables us to carry out our work – in all the different ways that communication takes place nowadays – with the conviction that it is possible to recognize and highlight the good news present in every story and in the face of each person.

Those who, in faith, entrust themselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit come to realize how God is present and at work in every moment of our lives and history, patiently bringing to pass a history of salvation. Hope is the thread with which this sacred history is woven, and its weaver is none other than the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. Hope is the humblest of virtues, for it remains hidden in the recesses of life; yet it is like the yeast that leavens all the dough. We nurture it by reading ever anew the Gospel, “reprinted” in so many editions in the lives of the saints who became icons of God’s love in this world. Today too, the Spirit continues to sow in us a desire for the Kingdom, thanks to all those who, drawing inspiration from the Good News amid the dramatic events of our time, shine like beacons in the darkness of this world, shedding light along the way and opening ever new paths of confidence and hope.

Thursday, 1st June, Mass at 5.30 pm

Second Collection this weekend for The Catholic Communications Network: work done on behalf of the Church by the communications office of the Bishops' Conference. Visit www.catholicnews.org.uk

Please remember in your prayers – Fr John MacWilliam, newly ordained Bishop of the Diocese of Laghouat, Algeria; Mike Goodridge for recovery of health; John Cooper, in hospital, for his full recovery.

Anniversaries - Please pray for the souls of Liz Axbey; Patrick Wilson; Mary Payne; Ethne Atkins; Dennis Litchfield; Jacques Van Heusen; Philip Hughes; Margaret Calloway; Paddy Tritton; Mabel Pronger; Dom Bernard Moss; Lloyd Midgeley. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them, may they rest in peace. Amen.

PARISH DIARY DATES

Please collect your Gift Aid letters from the Narthex this weekend. After that, they will be stored in the parish office.

Eucharistic Ministers Retreat – Saturday, 3rd June. Beginning with Mass in the Abbey Church at 9 am, followed by a morning of prayer, reflection and discussion; midday prayer in the Abbey Church at 1pm, then lunch for those who can stay. Please let the parish office know if you are able to attend and whether or not you will be able to join us for lunch. There will be a service of re-commissioning shortly after the retreat day.

Meditative Walk during Refugee Week, around the grounds of Worth Abbey, with prayer, and with the Lampedusa Cross. Saturday, 24th June, 3 pm from the Narthex, followed by Mass at 5 pm, with prayers for refugees, then supper, with refugee speakers. Everyone welcome for all or part of this. Please confirm if you can come.

First Holy Communion 2017/18: Classes begin Sept 2017, for children who will turn 8 years old by May 2018 and older. For details or to register, please contact Rachel Davies on 07801-696354 before the end of July.

Volunteers needed to support our First Holy Communion candidates and their families. A variety of roles available, related to welcoming and hospitality. Spend a couple of hours on a Saturday morning from 10.30 am (dates to be confirmed) to set up, welcome and provide refreshments. We would also love to hear from you if you are interested in joining the catechists. Please contact Fr Paul

CAFOD 'Just One World' General Election Action:

"Live simply that others may simply live..."

Inspired by Pope Francis to foster "...a deep desire to change this world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it..." please exercise your right to vote in the forthcoming General Election and call for a better future for our global family.

You can email your parliamentary candidate asking them to commit to tackle poverty, climate change and build a fairer future for all: www.e-activist.com/page/8526/action/1

Church Action on Poverty invites us to listen and share voices of those left behind due to poverty: www.voicesfromthemargins.org.uk

The Catholic Bishops Conference for England and Wales also offers reflections: www.catholicnews.org.uk/election17

Lord grant us wisdom to act always with integrity, seeking the protection and flourishing of all, and building a society based on justice and peace.

OTHER EVENTS:

Pentecost Songs of Praise: Pentecost Sunday, 4th June, 3.00 pm at The Friary Church, Crawley, RH10 1HR, followed by refreshments in the Friary Hall.

St Catherine's Hospice 20 Mile Midnight Walk. 10th June. Charlotte Jennings and Benjamin (Chapman year 11) are taking part in memory of Charlotte's father, Benjamin's grandfather, to give others the chance to receive the same care and support. To sponsor, please visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Charlotte--jennings

SAVE THE DATE:

Understanding CAFOD: Just One World Afternoon Saturday 1st July at English Martyrs' Church Hall, Horley RH6 8AR, 2:30- 4:30pm. Contact Martin or Jo: A&B CAFOD Volunteer Centre 01483 898866/ arundelandbrighton@cafod.org.uk

Faiths in Sussex Summer Conference: "Celebrating: "Sacred Poems, Music and Dance". 1st July, 1.00- 5.00 pm Langley Green Community Centre, Stagelands, Langley Green, Crawley, RH11 7PG. Contact iyadhdaoud@yahoo.co.uk

Annual National Justice & Peace Conference: A Sabbath for the Earth and the Poor: The Challenge of Pope Francis. 21st-23rd July, Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Contact admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

Evening of Reflection: St John's Church, Horsham, January 18th, 2018, 7-9pm. A chance for Confirmation Candidates to meet with Bishop Richard and to be led in the practice of Lectio Divina. Booking essential: Jack.Regan@dabnet.org

REGULAR EVENTS IN THE PARISH

Adoration: Friday evenings 7.00- 8.00pm in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. Reflection, music and silence. **Confessions (Sacrament of Reconciliation)** Sundays 9.10-9.30am before Mass. **Marian Prayer Group** - 2nd/4th Monday, 7.30pm, Lady Chapel. **Lectio Divina** - Tuesdays 8.20pm, for 30 mins, Parlour 3 (entry from the Narthex). Followed by Compline. **Mass with Prayers for Healing** (1st Wednesday) 7.15pm Blessed Sacrament Chapel. Next date 7th June **Christian Meditation Group in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel** 7.45pm (for prompt start at 8pm) to 8.45pm followed by Compline. Next dates 31st May, 14th & 28th June, 12th & 26th July . Contact: Gabrielle Joyce: 01342 326118/Caterina Brown: 01243 554001. **Vigil for Vocations** (1st Friday) 9.00pm to midnight in the Abbey Church. Next date 2nd June. **Children's Liturgy** (1st Saturday) Next date 3rd June, 5pm. **Sunday Prayers for Healing** Once a month, there is a half hour Service of Prayers for Healing in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel after 930 Sunday Mass. All welcome! (No service in June) Next date 2nd July. **Bereavement Support:** Rather than a regular drop in at St Benedict's, the Bereavement Team is offering a flexible new service. Clare and Marian invite you to contact them by email or through the Parish Office and they will arrange a time and place that suits to meet. Please email clare_harper@hotmail.com; marian.imhasly@gmail.com

Parish contacts: parish@worth.org.uk

Parish Priest: Fr Paul Fleetwood

Safeguarding: Rachel Davies 07801 696354

In Touch: worthintouch@hotmail.co.uk

Night time emergencies only 07956 782634

01342 710313 (Mob 07764 260216)

Car Share: Jill Carter 07836 316525

Parish website: worthabbeyparish.co.uk

If you are unable to attend Mass and would like to receive Holy Communion at home, please contact Fr Paul.

Next Sunday's readings: Pentecost Sunday

First reading – Acts 2: 1-11

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' (NRSV)

Second reading – 1 Cor 12. 3-7; 12-13

Gospel – John 20: 19-23

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.' (NRSV)

Monday, 29th Acts 19: 1-8; John 16: 29 – 33

Tuesday, 30th Acts 20: 17-27; John 17: 1-11

Wednesday, 31st The Visitation of Our Lady. Zeph 3: 14-18 or Rom 12: 9-16; Luke 1: 39-56

Thursday, 1st Acts 22: 30; 23: 6-11; John 17: 20-26

Friday, 2nd Acts 25: 13-21; John 21: 15-19

Saturday 3rd Acts 28: 16-20; 30-31; John 21: 20-25