

St Columba & the Northern Saints
HOLY COMMUNION
Sunday 3rd April 2022

EARLY WORSHIP

755 *He is the Lord*

897 *Lord I lift Your name on high (T+5)*

0000 *Lean hard (He lavishes grace) (T+22)*

WELCOME AND NOTICES

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
AMEN.

Song: 859 I will worship

COLLECT FOR 5TH SUNDAY IN LENT

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
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

PRAYERS OF PENITENCE

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

'Hear, O Israel,

the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God

with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind,

and with all your strength.'

The second is this:

'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

God so loved the world
that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ
to save us from our sins,

to be our advocate in heaven,
and to bring us to eternal life.

Let us confess our sins
in penitence and faith,
firmly resolved to keep God's commandments
and to live in love and peace with everyone.

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence,
through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you
in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.**

GOD'S PROMISE OF FORGIVENESS

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Song 293 Jesus, Jesus **(T+6)**

READING JOHN 12 1-8

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³ Then Mary took about half a litre of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴ But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵ 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' ⁶ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

⁷ 'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied. 'It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you,^[b] but you will not always have me.'

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

SERMON

Six days before the passover, mere days before the Last Supper, the day before the triumphal entry into Jerusalem - which we look at and marks the beginning of Holy Week next Sunday.

Jesus returns to Bethany to Lazarus, Martha and Mary.

We stop for a moment, pause for a moment, a dinner is given in Jesus' honour. If we read the account in Matthew and Mark's gospels it's possible that it was held in the house of Simon the Leper, with Martha serving it was probably a joint effort between more than one household to honour Jesus.

I've never had a dinner given in my honour, I suspect that most of us won't have.

I do remember however, when I was only a child, about nine years old, my father who was in the Irish Guards, took a posting as an instructor at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. This is where the British Army trains its officers. It's a prestige establishment, and very well regarded. So much so in fact that many countries around the world send some of their own prospective officers to Sandhurst to be trained.

During the two years my dad was an instructor there one of the officer cadets was from Saudi Arabia, a member of the Saudi Royal family.

As he came to the end of his time there and was going to successfully pass out, which to avoid the confusion is the term for successfully completing your training rather than fainting!

So he invited my dad to a dinner at this house, when I say his house I mean one of his houses, undoubtedly there were many. The dinner was to say thank you to my dad for being his instructor and helping make sure he successfully graduated. My mum and I got to go along as part of this and we were all driven in a big car and then arrived at this enormous house - if I used the word mansion that would probably be an accurate description.

To a nine year old child it was astonishing, and then the dinner itself was like nothing I had ever seen before, like something out of a movie, big tables laden with food, lots of people. Partway through the dinner someone approached me from the side with what turned out to be some presents for me.

One of them was a small box which when I opened it contained an electronic game - one that folded out and had two screens, it was a version of Donkey Kong by Nintendo.

You might be thinking well, so what, a pocket electronic game, I've got an iPhone in my pocket that can do something ten times better than that.

But this was 1982, and these things were only just realised and they cost a small fortune, I'm not even sure they'd arrived in the UK for general sale by this point - I can tell you that all my friends were astonished by it, very impressed and all wanted to have a go!

It was an amazing gift, it probably cost a month's wages in those days for a lot of people. Almost 40 years later I can still remember it, the look, the feel, how cool it was.

The gift that Mary brings Jesus in our Bible passage, is even more astonishing, by all accounts a pint of pure Nard would have cost the best part of a year's wages for the average person.

We think that Lazarus, Martha and Mary were probably reasonably well off for the times, probably not as well off as the Saudi Royal Family though!

So that pint of Nard was more than likely hard earned, stored away and valued.

She doesn't just bring it to him and give it to him. It wasn't simply handed over, instead she performs an astonishing act of service, she takes the nard, the perfume and anoints Jesus with it. It is the most extravagant of gifts.

It's a symbol of consecration, we still use oil for that purpose today, indeed in a couple of months time we will be celebrating the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. At her coronation all those years ago she was anointed with oil to symbolise her Royal status.

But this oil, this nard, not only symbolised Jesus as King, but also his upcoming death - as Jesus says, "intended for the day of my burial".

Judas pipes up and say "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a years wages!" Although the scripture also clearly tells us that he didn't say this because he was worrying about the poor but more because he was keen to help himself to some of the proceeds.

In this moment the actions of these two are complete opposites. Mary, in an act of service. Judas in an act of self-service.

How very different are their actions and responses.

Judas thinks of himself - no wonder we are told that the love of money is the root of all evil. Not money itself of course, money was used to buy the nard, the perfume after all. But the love of it, the lust after riches and wealth has been the undoing of many. Judas has let his love of money come between him and the most valuable relationship he had - Jesus.

Mary instead, had contributed an act of incredible worship to that relationship, she had given not only of her money, but of her heart. Ever heard the saying "Put your money where your mouth is", often used to challenge someone to back up what they're saying with something of perceived value.

Mary didn't put her money where her mouth was, she put her money where her heart was. She broke open the perfume and anointed Jesus with it, she wiped his feet with her hair, in that culture it would have been a shocking act of service, even if the perfume had been cheap. She gave Jesus her all.

The fragrance of the perfume filled the house. The fragrance of her service filled the lives of those around her.

The smell of that generous gift was more than just the the oil, it was the love that went with it. Places of love, hospitality and generosity often have a fragrance about them don't they? Something that attracts.

There are choices laid before us, all of us, not always so extreme perhaps as these two, Mary giving her all and Judas wanting to take it all - or at least as much as he could get. Did Mary know what was going to happen in a weeks time? That Jesus would be in a tomb? We can't say for certain, but there must have been something within her, some awareness that told that now was the right moment to do this. Surely this can't just have been a decision of the head alone, but the heart also.

Jesus is to enter Jerusalem anointed as a King, but also anointed for his coming death. We have choices before us. Right and wrong choices. Choices to follow Jesus or to betray him. Choices to do the right thing or the wrong thing.

We can look at the world around us and see many who have made wrong choices. President Vladimir Putin would certainly seem to have made wrong choices, choices that have led to conflict and suffering for many. He thought he would triumph quickly and it has been anything but that.

Our wrong choices don't have to be anything like that scale, even this week we saw Will Smith jump up on stage and slap Chris Rock at the Oscars over an insult to his wife. His actions have been widely condemned since. What should have been his moment of triumph - Best Actor Oscar has instead been overshadowed by the controversy of that slap.

I find it interesting that apparently Denzel Washington, speaking to Will Smith shortly afterwards said, "In your highest moments, be careful; that's when the devil comes for you." Judas should have been in his highest moments, a disciple of Jesus, trusted with the money of the group, but he had made wrong choices, and got into the habit of wrong choices and those choices ended with him betraying Jesus to the pharisees.

Now am I comparing Will Smith to Judas? Of course not, but it is a very public fall from grace, a choice badly made with consequences already seen and undoubtedly more to come.

By contrast, Mary's highest moment is to sit at the feet of Jesus in an act of service recorded in today's gospel passage.

When the choices come, which sort of choice will you make, the choice of Judas, the choice of Will Smith, or the choice of Mary?

Happily for us, we have the opportunity for forgiveness from God when we make poor choices, and undoubtedly Will Smith does too. It doesn't mean that there aren't consequences in the world around us for those choices though.

What choices will you make? In the small, and the large? In the moment and in consideration?

Will the fragrant smell of love pervade your choices?

God's invitation to us is clear, for those who have yet to make a choice, choose relationship, choose God and a life with Him.

For those who have already made that choice, continue to make the choice that matters, the right choice, the act of service, of humility, of love, of grace and of hope.

As Mary did, choose God, choose life, that you may live, the life that He gives you He gives you forever.

Amen.

Song 388 May the fragrance

THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit
and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified
under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again

in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand
of the Father.

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism
for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

PRAYERS

Heavenly Father, hear our prayers for our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. Lord we ask for peace, reconciliation and comfort for all who don't know what tomorrow will bring. Lord may Your Kingdom come, and may Your will be done. Father God we ask for You to be with all, especially children who are suffering as the crisis in Ukraine worsens, for those who are anxious and fearful. Father we ask that decision makers hear Your voice, parents protecting their families, deciding whether to stay or leave, church leaders as they support and comfort people, and Lord we ask for wise actions from global leaders.

Father God we cry out for an end to this crisis, for Mercy, Peace and Truth because You are Light, Hope, Power and Love.
Oh Lord we lift up Cathy and Rachel to You Lord. We pray that You will console their hearts as they grieve for Richard a husband and father, who has gone on to Glory. Please bring comfort to their hearts as they remember and reflect on Your promises. We ask that as they mourn, You will give them peace, security and healing in the midst of their tears.
Lord we also ask for Your healing hand over Maureen and John. We pray for a full recovery and ask that You give them strength and resilience for the days ahead.
In Jesus name
Amen.

Father God...

It is always difficult for those who are left behind when You take one of Your children home. However, for those of us left behind, it should be an opportunity to reflect and to realise how fragile life is. It underlines the importance of having You, Father, as Lord and Saviour of our lives. We confess our need for You, Father God.

Teach us Lord how to choose only Your way, so each step will lead us closer to You. Show us Your ways Lord.... Teach us Your paths. Guide us in Your way and teach us. For You are God our Saviour, and our hope is in You.

Help us Father to start each day with You in our minds and in our hearts, placing our lives into Your strong hands. Helps us, Lord Jesus, to walk by The Word and not our feelings. We pray and ask that You protect us from our own careless thoughts, words and actions. Keep

us Lord, from being distracted by: “My” wants, “My” desires and “My” thoughts of how things should be. Help us to remember that we belong to You, Father God.

We praise You for Your faithfulness, Your great power, Your forgiveness and Your amazing love. You are our Peace, our Protector...our Refuge. We praise You because You are trustworthy and true...because You never leave nor forsake us. You, Lord Jesus, are our comforter in sorrow, pain and distress. You are The Way, The Truth and The Life.

Father, feed us with Your daily bread because Your food, like manna, will sustain us throughout any trials. Help us Lord, to embrace what comes our way as an opportunity...rather than a personal inconvenience. We give You all the praise and glory in all our circumstances Father because we know that You use this to teach us and to help us grow.

How amazing is it that even though You see the ways in which we will fail and mess up, You are still there and we can feel Your absolute love for us! It is unbelievable, beyond our comprehension that You, Father God, Creator of Heaven and Earth...that You love us warts and all!

Today Father, is a new day, a new start. Yesterday is gone and with it any regrets, mistakes or failures we may have experienced. We thank you for today Lord. For a new opportunity to love, to give, to serve, to encourage, to forgive and to be all that You want each of us to be.

In Jesus name we pray...
Amen.

THE PEACE

Since we are justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has given us access to his grace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

Song: 1561 This is my desire.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

The Lord is here.

His Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right and good
to give you thanks and praise,
almighty God and everlasting Father,
through Jesus Christ your Son.

For in these forty days
you lead us into the desert of repentance
that through a pilgrimage of
prayer and discipline

we may grow in grace
and learn to be your people once again.
Through fasting, prayer and acts of service
you bring us back to your generous heart.
Through study of your holy word
you open our eyes to your
presence in the world
and free our hands to welcome others
into the radiant splendour of your love.

As we prepare to celebrate the Easter feast
with joyful hearts and minds
we bless you for your mercy
and join with saints and angels
for ever praising you and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth
are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Lord, you are holy indeed,
the source of all holiness;
grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit,
and according to your holy will,
these gifts of bread and wine
may be to us the body and blood
of our Lord Jesus Christ;
who, in the same night that
he was betrayed,
took bread
and gave you thanks;
he broke it
and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat;
this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.
In the same way, after supper
he took the cup and gave you thanks;
he gave it to them, saying:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you
and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.

Jesus Christ is Lord:
**Lord by your cross and resurrection
You have set us free.
You are the Saviour of the world.**

And so, Father, calling to mind
his death on the cross,
his perfect sacrifice made once
for the sins of the whole world;
rejoicing in his mighty resurrection
and glorious ascension,
and looking for his coming in glory,
we celebrate
this memorial
of our redemption.

As we offer you this our sacrifice
of praise and thanksgiving,
we bring before you this bread and this cup
and we thank you for counting us worthy
to stand in your presence and serve you.
Send the Holy Spirit on your people
and gather into one in your kingdom
all who share this one bread
and one cup,
so that we,
in the company of all the saints,
may praise and glorify you for ever,
through Jesus Christ our Lord;
by whom, and with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be yours,
almighty Father,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:
**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen.**

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

The Minister receives the bread and wine after saying these words:

The body of Christ keep you in eternal life
Amen.

The blood of Christ keep you in eternal life
Amen.

After which the congregation receive communion in silence.

COMMUNION HYMNS 1724 Behold the Lamb (Communion Hymn)
 369 Lord, You are so precious

AFTER COMMUNION PRAYERS

Holy God,
we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ:
may we who are
partakers at his table
reflect his life in word and deed,
that all the world may know his power to change and save.
This we ask through
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

**Almighty God,
We thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood
of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him
we offer you
our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen**

Song 1632 Wonderful, so wonderful (Beautiful one)

BLESSING:

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,
to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you
and remain with you always.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen