

## ***Morning Worship for the sixth Sunday of Easter***

### ***Preparation***

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

**He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He has given us new life and hope.

**He has raised Jesus from the dead.**

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

**He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

### ***Opening Prayer***

**Faithful one, whose word is life:**

**come with saving power**

**to free our praise,**

**inspire our prayer**

**and shape our lives**

**for the kingdom of your Son,**

**Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**Amen.**

Cast your burden upon the Lord:

**And he will sustain you.**

Create in us clean hearts O God:

**And renew a right spirit within us.**

Cast us not away from your presence:

**And take not your Holy Spirit from us.**

Give us the joy of your saving help:

**And sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.**

Blessed be the Lord day by day:

**The God of our salvation who bears our burdens.**

### ***We confess our sins.***

Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord,

we come to you in sorrow for our sins,

and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength,

and not by the power of your resurrection.

In your mercy, forgive us.

***Lord, hear us and help us.***

We have lived by the light of our own eyes,  
as faithless and not believing.

In your mercy, forgive us.

***Lord, hear us and help us.***

We have lived for this world alone,  
and doubted our home in heaven.

In your mercy, forgive us.

***Lord, hear us and help us.***

May the God of love and power

forgive you and free you from your sins,

heal and strengthen you by his Spirit,

and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. ***Amen.***

### ***Praise***

O Lord, open our lips:

**And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

Let us worship the Lord:

**All praise to his name.**

### ***Gloria in Excelsis***

**Glory to God in the highest,**

**and peace to his people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly King,**

**almighty God and Father,**

**we worship you, we give you thanks,**

**we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,**

**Lord God, Lamb of God,**

**you take away the sin of the world:**

**have mercy on us;**

**you are seated at the right hand of the Father:**

**receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,**

**you alone are the Lord,**

**you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,**

**with the Holy Spirit,**

**in the glory of God the Father.**

**Amen.**

## ***The word of God***

### *A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.*

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we too are his offspring." Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.' (Acts 17:22–31)

### *A reading from the gospel of John*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.' (John 14:15–21)

### *A reflection by Gordon Gray Reader at St Mary's*

The Lord is risen – he is risen indeed, halleluiah. I suspect that, like me, many of you have been asked, at some time, to draw a picture of what you think God might look like. But what about a

picture of the Holy Spirit. The Bible provides various images including of a dove, of tongues of flame or a freely blowing breeze. So it's not easy to get a definitive picture of what the Spirit looks like.

Except....Except that in this week's reading we get two really helpful clues in v16 that, together, offer a pretty good picture of just what the Holy Spirit might look like. The first clue is that the Holy Spirit looks like an Advocate - someone who stands up for us when we need it; someone who speaks on our behalf; someone who lends us a helping hand, takes our side, and won't leave us while we're down.

The second clue is that the Holy Spirit looks like Jesus. The Spirit is "another advocate" Jesus being the first. The Spirit, Jesus goes on, will abide with us just as Jesus, the Word made flesh, has abided with us. The Spirit is sent in Jesus' name and reminds us of what he taught (14:25). In a very real way, the Spirit mediates Jesus presence and helps to keep his promise that he will not leave us orphaned and will come to us.

In summary, then: the Holy Spirit is an advocate that looks a whole lot like Jesus. Which means that we've actually seen the Spirit lots of times. Anytime, in fact, someone stands up for another. Anytime someone acts like Jesus... Anytime someone bears the love of Christ to another... we've seen the Holy Spirit.

No wonder, then, that Jesus says, "you know him." Because, as it turns out, the Holy Spirit at one time or another has probably looked a lot like you, even a lot like me, and definitely a lot like each and all of us when we do these things when we act as the Body of Christ. We are the Body of Christ; in the one Spirit we were all baptised into the one Body.

The Holy Spirit then, looks a lot like you and me when we stand up for others, try to be more like Jesus, and bring Christ's love into the world.

Now a recurring theme in the sermons I have preached at St Mary's over the years is about people who bring Christ's love into the world because they are in the right place at the right time. I have another such story today for which I am grateful to Peter Bennett. It goes like this.

"A woman hurried to the pharmacy to get a prescription; when she got back to her car she found that she had locked her keys inside. She found an old coat hanger left on the ground. She looked at it and said, "I don't know how to use this." She bowed her head and asked God to send her some help. In less than 5 minutes a beaten-up old motorcycle pulled up, driven by a bearded man who was wearing old biker leathers with a skull and crossbones on it. He got off of his cycle and asked if he could help. She said: "Yes, my daughter is sick. I've locked my keys in my car. I must get home. Please, can you use this hanger to unlock my car?" He said, "Sure." He walked over to the car, and in less than a minute the car was open.

She hugged the man and through tears said, "Thank You, God, for sending me such a very nice man." The man heard her little prayer and replied, "Lady, I am NOT a nice man. I just got out of prison yesterday; I was in prison for car theft." The woman hugged the man again, sobbing, "Oh, thank you, God! You even sent me a Professional!"

Each one of us, just like that former prisoner, may be used to bring God's love into the world, to stand as an Advocate to someone in need, to act as the Holy Spirit. Even though we know exactly what we look like most of us keep a mirror near the front door so we can check what we look like before we go out. Let me encourage you, when you do that, to remind yourselves that you are seeing the Holy Spirit going out into the world. Send us out in the power of the Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. The Lord is risen – he is risen indeed, halleluiah. Amen

### ***Our faith***

Let us declare our faith in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Christ died for our sins  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he was buried;  
he was raised to life on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
afterwards he appeared to his followers,  
and to all the apostles:  
this we have received,  
and this we believe. Amen.**

### ***Prayers of intercession- Diane Goodwin***

Dear Lord and Father, we acknowledge that you are the beginning and the end in all things, the Alpha and the Omega. In you all things hold together. You took the first step in our relationship with you and have shown us perfect love down the ages. You sent your son Jesus to die for us. Nothing we deserve, just your incomparable grace and mercy and a love that cannot be measured. Give us the wisdom to understand you, diligence to seek you, patience to wait for you, eyes to see you, a heart to meditate upon you, and a life to proclaim you.

Lord Jesus, you taught us to love our neighbour, and to care for those in need as if we were caring for you. In these troubling times be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation. In their loneliness, be their consolation; in their anxiety, be their hope; in their darkness, be their light.

We pray for hospital staff and all front line and key workers sacrificing so much for the good of others. Give skill, sympathy and resilience to all who are caring for the sick, and your wisdom to those searching for a cure. Strengthen them with your Spirit, that through their work many will be restored to health. Thank you that even in these anxious times, you are with us. Help us to put our trust in you and keep us safe.

Lord in your mercy ....*hear our prayer*

We pray for the church. We ask that you would renew, revive and restore the church throughout the world. We pray for all peoples who suffer persecution whatever their faith and think especially of those Christian communities in Nigeria who are murdered, kidnapped and imprisoned for their belief. Strengthen feeble arms and weak knees and let them never give up hope. We pray that you would bless those who work tirelessly to bring your gospel of hope to those who need it throughout the world. We pray for our own church here at St Mary's, for Joy, Stephen and Gordon and their families and for all those who work and minister behind the scenes. Encourage and inspire them as to how we can grow as a church family. We thank you for the wonderful and new opportunities we have to share your good news to those around us.

Lord in your mercy ....*hear our prayer*

Lord God, help us to remember that you said "I am with you always: when we're happy or sad; healthy or ill; peaceful or worried. Help us to remember that you are with us in everything today. Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me. Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger. Lord in your mercy ....*hear our prayer*

Thank you dear Lord for your promise that death is not the end, but only the beginning of an eternal life with you. We remember all those on our prayer list who need your care; the family and friends of those who have died; and we recall those whose years mind falls at this time. Lord, we entrust to your tender care those who are ill or in pain, knowing that whenever danger threatens your everlasting arms are there to hold them safe. Comfort and heal them, and restore them to health and strength through Jesus Christ.

Merciful Father **accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

*A prayer for the coronavirus outbreak*

Keep us, good Lord,  
under the shadow of your mercy  
in this time of uncertainty and distress.  
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may rejoice in your comfort  
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love  
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

*We join together with Christians throughout the world in the prayer that  
Jesus taught us.*

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

### **Conclusion**

*The Collect for the day*

God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness  
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:  
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,  
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy;  
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.

God has claimed us as his own.

**He has brought us out of darkness.**

He has made us light to the world.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

**He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

*We end with the words of the Grace, an ancient Christian prayer of  
fellowship, remembering that although we are not together in person,  
nothing can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our  
Lord.*

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ  
and the love of God  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all evermore. Amen.**



*If you would like us to pray for you during this time of stress and anxiety,  
please leave a prayer request on the website email address or contact Joy  
([vicar@stmaryseatonbray.org.uk](mailto:vicar@stmaryseatonbray.org.uk) )*

Reverend Joy Cousans  
Reverend Stephen Burge

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