

Transcript August 30th 2020

Theme: God's way is often different to our way

Liturgy 1

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

We have come together in the name of Christ
to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive God's holy word,
to pray for the needs of the world, and to seek the forgiveness of our sins,
that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may give ourselves to the service of God.

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

**Lord God,
we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight.
We are sorry and repent.
Have mercy on us according to your love.
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.
Renew a right spirit within us and restore us to the joy of your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins,
and restore us in his image to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Blessed is the Lord,
for he has heard the voice of our prayer;
therefore shall our hearts dance for joy
and in our song will we praise our God.

Blessed are you, Lord our God,
creator and redeemer of all;
to you be glory and praise for ever.
From the waters of chaos you drew forth the world
and in your great love fashioned us in your image.
Now, through the deep waters of death,
you have brought your people to new birth
by raising your Son to life in triumph.
May Christ your light ever dawn in our hearts
as we offer you our sacrifice of thanks and praise.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:
Blessed be God for ever.

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever.

Amen.

Psalm 105:1-6

Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.
Sing to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.
Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.
Look to the Lord and his strength;
seek his face always.
Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,
you his servants, the descendants of Abraham,
his chosen ones, the children of Jacob.

Song

Father I place into your hands

1.Father, I place into Your hands,
The things I cannot do.
Father, I place into Your hands
The things that I've been through.
Father, I place into Your hands
The way that I should go,
For I know I always can trust You.

2.Father, I place into Your hands
My friends and family.
Father, I place into Your hands
The things that trouble me.
Father, I place into Your hands
The person I would be,
For I know I always can trust You.

3.Father, we love to see Your face,
We love to hear Your voice.
Father, we love to sing Your praise
And in Your name rejoice.
Father, we love to walk with You
And in Your presence rest,
For we know we always can trust You.

4.Father, I want to be with You
And do the things You do.
Father, I want to speak the words
That You are speaking too.
Father, I want to love the ones
That You will draw to You,
For I know that I am one with You.

Reading

Jeremiah 15:15-21

Lord, you understand;
remember me and care for me.
Avenge me on my persecutors.
You are long-suffering—do not take me away;
think of how I suffer reproach for your sake.
When your words came, I ate them;
they were my joy and my heart's delight,
for I bear your name, Lord God Almighty.
I never sat in the company of revelers,
never made merry with them;
I sat alone because your hand was on me
and you had filled me with indignation.
Why is my pain unending
and my wound grievous and incurable?
You are to me like a deceptive brook,
like a spring that fails.
Therefore this is what the Lord says:
"If you repent, I will restore you
that you may serve me;
if you utter worthy, not worthless, words,
you will be my spokesman.
Let this people turn to you,
but you must not turn to them.
I will make you a wall to this people,
a fortified wall of bronze;
they will fight against you
but will not overcome you,
for I am with you
to rescue and save you,"
declares the Lord.
"I will save you from the hands of the wicked
and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel."

Matthew 16:21-28

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life^[a] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will

find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

"Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Liturgy 2

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel,
who has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour,
born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets God promised of old *
to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us,

To show mercy to our ancestors,
and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham:
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,

Free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.

And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,

To give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of all their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace. *Luke 1.68-79*

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be forever. Amen.

Homily - Nick

The ways of God are not the instinctive way that humans work, on the whole.

The way of weakness, smallness, faithfulness, hiddenness, obedience are the ways of Christ in the gospels. Humans struggle with these.

As a church, organisation, group of congregations in the diocese, the stated aim is to grow in numbers and influence.

Finances currently falling off a cliff (pay on the gate, rather than buying a season ticket). Appointments, pastoral reorganisation, etc. Closure of churches. Congregations not returning?

What if smallness is what God wills for his church? Maybe our fight to continue to push outwards, to hold on to our position, our income, our status in society is fighting against the purposes of God? I've said as much in Archbishop's Council – "Are we sure we are not pushing in the wrong direction? Why do we think that the impending crisis is not the will of God?" I got no clear answer, and was not more popular!

What if our forced weakness causes us to 'seek the Lord and his strength' (Ps 105)? Maybe we will discover the hard and painful way that the path is self-denial, suffering, obedience, faithfulness. A 'big church' does not necessarily mean a 'good or equitable or righteous church' (and I suspect history may back me on this). I'm not sure that the church was ever intended to hold power, and doesn't necessarily do it well!

Maybe we are fighting the will of God and need to learn to die, at least in some ways.

I don't imagine the future of the church as an enormous and successful institution, spreading its reach like a supermarket chain, or planting itself (indeed metastasising) around the world, here, there and everywhere in some sort of hegemony.

Jesus challenged Peter because his ways were not God's ways, his mind was on human things and not divine things.

Maybe the church, by grace or nature or circumstances, should be more like small, faithful worshipping communities, dotted like small monasteries, outliers, small lights in dark places, standing out against the prevailing attitudes of society where individualism and self-realisation rule the day, instead offering hospitality, care, shelter, nurture in faith and spiritual growth, stewardship of the earth, seeking out the poor and lost. What if a small group committed themselves to a common rule of life, praying and eating together often, invested in each other's lives, and creatively and actively searching for ways to serve their community? Committed rather than involved (bacon and eggs), avowed to each other? Losing their lives in order to find them.

The way of Christ goes against the flow.

The way of Christ is the way of the cross, and the way of the cross is not the way of popularity or for the many, for it is the way to lose one's life into something greater.

Only when standing in that place, dead but alive, will we be able to 'see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom'. Not in the future, but in the present.

Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Intercessions

In our prayers of intercession today we think especially of those who are faced with choices and decisions that will effect not only themselves, but perhaps their loved ones and families, work colleagues and employees, or even whole sections of society either nationally or even globally.

At life's crossroads help us to recognise the road you would choose for us.

We bring before you our world. Provide guidance to those in countries where political change may come either peacefully via a ballot box, or with violence and bloodshed.

At life's crossroads help us to recognise the road you would choose for us.

For world leaders who hold the power in their hands to save our world from climate disaster, but will need to make unpopular sacrifices to achieve this goal.

At life's crossroads help us to recognise the road you would choose for us.

For those responsible for the production and distribution of a vaccine for Covid 19, who must choose between nationalism and a fair sharing of such precious resources world wide.

At life's crossroads help us to recognise the road you would choose for us.

In our own country we pray especially for our young people faced with so much uncertainty about their exam results and what this will mean for their future. May they feel your hand guiding them at this time, helping them to achieve their potential in ways they might not have thought of in less turbulent times.

At life's crossroads help us to recognise the road you would choose for us.

In our local community we remember those who face uncertain times financially, or through illness due to covid 19 or other circumstances, and we take a moment to name those we know personally.

At life's crossroads help us to recognise the road you would choose for us.

Finally we pray for our Church, especially for our leaders who are working so hard to find new ways to "be Church" in these strange times.

At life's crossroads help us to recognise the road you would choose for us.

For all those who may struggle with the unfamiliar, and need the comfort of well known words and methods. May they find the comfort of your presence wherever they are and know that you are the God of everything and everywhere, both past and future.

Ever old and ever new

Keep us all travelling along with you

Amen

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
you are always more ready to hear than we to pray
and to give more than either we desire or deserve:
pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy,
forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid
and giving us those good things
 which we are not worthy to ask
but through the merits and mediation
of 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.

Lord's Prayer

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

Song

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

1."Great is Thy faithfulness, " O God
my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with
Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy
compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt
be.

"Great is Thy faithfulness!"
"Great is Thy faithfulness!"
Morning by morning new mercies I
see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath
provided—
"Great is Thy faithfulness, " Lord,
unto me!

2.Summer and winter, and springtime
and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses
above,
Join with all nature in manifold
witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and
love.

3.Pardon for sin and a peace that
endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and
to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for
tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand
beside!

Blessing

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

Grace

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.