Reflection for Second Sunday of Easter

I found myself in the car – making a permitted journey and listening to the radio. To have seen me is to realise that hair styles and colouring is not high on my agenda, not because I don’t care how I look, but because nature in her wisdom hasn’t endowed me with enough hair to be fussy about. Anyway, the programme seemed to be concentrating on hair and beauty care in times of pandemic and the advice seemed to be that it is an ideal opportunity to give your hair and skin a rest from all the products we tend to use and, more to the point, it may even be good for your hair and skin. From time to time, I and many others no doubt, will refer to our bodies as a temple, and in Christian terms our bodies are just this, temples, temples of the Holy Spirit poured into us at baptism.

In today’s gospel one body takes centre stage, it is the body of the risen Christ. He is no ghost, as we are told elsewhere in the scriptures. Touch and see he says to Thomas, put your finger into the holes the nails made in my hands, put your hand into my side which was pierced with a spear. Clearly Christ’s resurrected body was different to the body he inhabited on earth. He was, for example, able to appear through doors and walls, but still as today’s gospel makes clear his resurrected body had a close connection to his earthly body, bearing in the gospel we have just listened to the marks of his earthly suffering.

As Christians our faith and hope is that everything about us will be resurrected. Although when we die there is a separation between body and soul, a separation and decay which comes about because of sin, our understanding is that at the resurrection this separation will be overcome, and we will be redeemed, we will be made whole once more. Everything about you and me, everything that makes us who and what we are, will be redeemed at the resurrection. With Christ we will possess resurrected bodies, because Christ’s triumph over sin, suffering and death is complete. It wasn’t a partial triumph which meant that this and this will be redeemed, but that and that will be left unredeemed. The power, the glory, the resurrection of Christ is complete, it touches every aspect of creation, from the depths of hell to the heights of the heavens. Nothing is left untreated by the power of God, because there is nowhere that God cannot go, and nothing that is beyond God’s reach.

It is because we believe that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and because we believe they will be resurrected and reunited to our souls, that they have a future, that we place such emphasis on how they are treated in death; why they are not simply discarded, but revered, buried or cremated with prayer and dignity, and why the Church asks that cremated remains are buried not scattered. One of the saddest aspects of our current situation is the way in which we are having to say our farewells to the family and friends we have loved; not being able to be with them as they have died, not being able to have the funeral Mass they or we would have wanted. I know from my own experience that these rites, and in particular the presence, the bodily presence, of family and friends, is a great support.

Our faith, our Christianity, is an incarnational religion, bodies are important. Christ’s physical presence among us, the ability of his apostles and disciples to touch him in life, just as Thomas touched in his resurrection, stands at the heart of our Christian faith – Christ’s is a real physical and bodily presence. Today, more than ever, as we are denied that physical presence, one to another, as we face time and keep our distance, the importance of being physically present to one another is brought home over and over again. Not being able to shake hands, not being able to stand close by, not being able to incarnate or make present our love, having to keep a distance, - gets in the way of things. Here, if you like, there is a disconnect between body and soul, between what we can do physically and what we would want to do, it’s a kind of death, where life as we were intended to live it, is disjointed and impoverished. Our celebration of Holy Week is a reminder that Christ shared in all of this – that when he died on the Cross with his body was laid in a grave and his soul descended into hell – Christ knew in all its pains and torment the separation of body and soul. But what we celebrate in this Easter season, what we are reminded of in today’s Gospel, is that this separation, this torment, this hurt, is and will be healed. ‘Jesus came and stood among them’ and he said to them, ‘Peace be with you’...and they were filled with joy.  

Fr Michael
Second Sunday of Easter April 19, 2020
Reading 1, Acts 2: 42-47
Responsorial Psalm, 117
Reading 2, Peter 1: 3-9
Gospel, John 20: 19-31

Masses will be offered for Annie Cawley (Anniv) and the People of the Parish.

Monday April 20, 2020 – Easter feria
Reading 1, Acts 4: 23-31
Responsorial Psalm, 2
Gospel, John 3: 1-8

Masses will be offered for Colin Molloy (Anniv) and David Moon (RIP)

Tuesday April 21, 2020 – St Anselm
Reading 1, Acts 4: 32-37
Responsorial Psalm, 92
Gospel, John 3: 7-15

Masses will be offered for Maria Frosztega (Anniv) and Sr Agnes McKeon (RIP)

Wednesday April 22, 2020 – Easter feria
Reading 1, Acts 5: 17-26
Responsorial Psalm, 33
Gospel, John 3: 16-21

Masses will be offered for John Cassidy’s Family intentions and Peter Okoro (RIP)

Thursday April 23, 2020 – ST GEORGE
Patron of England
Reading 1, Acts 5: 27-33
Responsorial Psalm,33
Gospel, John 3: 31-36

Masses will be offered for Celia Dunne (RIP) and Anne Byrne (RIP)

Friday April 24, 2020 – Ss Erkenwald & Mellitus
Reading 1, Acts 5: 34-42
Responsorial Psalm, 26
Gospel, John 6: 1-15

Masses will be offered for Mary Curran (RIP) and Elizabeth Foley (Anniv).

Saturday April 25, 2020 – St Mark the Evangelist
Reading 1, First Peter 5: 5-14
Responsorial Psalm, 88
Gospel, Mark 16: 15-20

Masses will be offered for Eileen Vasey (Anniv) and Anne Lawler (RIP)

On Sunday 26 April, THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER, Masses will be offered for Elizabeth Delaney (Anniv) and the people of the parish. The anniversary Mass for Roger Hagger will be offered on Tuesday 28 April, the Mass for Roy McGooghan (RIP) on Wednesday 29 April, and the Mass for Ellen McCarthy’s intentions on Thursday 30th April.

PLEASE PRAY
Together with Churches Together in St Albans, this week we pray for the Vicar and members of St Marys, Marshallwick.

For those suffering with the Coronavirus and for all the Sick

For those who have died recently: Catherine Mannion, John Taylor, Peter Okoro, Margaret Sweeney, Mary Jozwiaka, William Mackie, Mary Malik, Mariano Casotti, Edward Turner, Mary Harper

For all those whose anniversaries occur at this time: Annie Cawley, Colin Molloy, Maria Frosztega, Elizabeth Foley, Eileen Vasey, Elizabeth Delaney and Roger Hagger

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace

Offertory
Several people who usually contribute to the offertory either in cash or by using the offertory promise envelopes have contacted the presbytery asking how they might continue their weekly giving. We do not know how long the current situation will continue for and I am conscious that with the uncertainty the current situation creates, many will be concerned about their jobs and livelihoods. If you are able to – and I genuinely mean ‘if’ – and you wish to continue with your regular pattern of giving you may like to consider giving by standing order. This seems the most sensible way forward as it avoids the weekly handling of both envelopes and cash. If so, please email the parish office at stalbans@rcdow.org.uk and ask for details of how you might give by standing order.
Parish Update We have begun to send out a Parish Update by email. If you have not been in receipt of these and would like to receive them please email stalbans@rcdow.org.uk requesting the Parish Update. Also, please visit the Parish Website to keep in touch and see what resources there are to help you. The website now includes a reflection on the Sunday Gospel written by Fr Michael or Fr Julian. Also you will find the Diocese of Westminster website and Vatican Website useful at this time.

Safeguarding & DBS Checks Even though many aspects of parish life have had to be put on hold there are still things we can be doing to prepare for when things are up and running again. If you are a volunteer and work with children or vulnerable adults you will need to have an up to date DBS in place. If you do not have a DBS or do not have an up to date one, issued within the last three years, why not use this period to complete the necessary paperwork. Much can be done on-line. Please contact Mary Harber at stalbanssg3@safeguardrcdow.org.uk / 07976 277059

Virtual Prayer Group We begun a virtual prayer group which met each evening in Holy Week at 7.30 pm and we will continue to meet on Sunday and Wednesday evenings, also at 7.30 pm. If you would like to take part please contact Brendan Roche at bkroche@me.com

Parish Assembly & MSC Mass Please note that in view of the Coronavirus pandemic both the Parish Assembly and the Celebration of the MSCs’ time in St Albans will be postponed until 2021.

Live streaming of mass can be found through https://www.churchservices.tv (click on ‘churches’ under menu)

Please note that the Confirmation set for May 30th has been postponed.

The Marriage Preparation Course scheduled for April is now cancelled. If you are hoping to getting married please contact Fr Michael. Please note that a minimum of six months notice is required.

Year of The Word: The session planned for 28th March is now cancelled. These remaining sessions reflecting on ‘Matthew’s Gospel’ are currently scheduled for 25th April, 9th May, 27th June, 18th July, 19th September and 17th October.

St George was a soldier of the Roman army who was beheaded for his Christian faith. He was likely born in Cappadocia, but after his father’s death, moved to Palestine where he served with distinction in Diocletian’s army. Diocletian, who hated Christians, tried to force his soldiers to offer a sacrifice to the Roman gods. George refused to do this despite Diocletian’s efforts to bribe him. Finally, Diocletian ordered George’s execution on 23 April 303 AD.

St George is often depicted as a soldier on horseback killing a dragon. This is a representation of a popular story written in 1265 in which he saved a town terrorised by a dragon with one blow of his lance. The image, however, is more significantly a powerful symbol of the victory of Christian faith over evil personified by the devil who is symbolised by the dragon according to the imagery in Revelations.

St George is invoked as a patron of military causes, not only because he was a soldier, but also due to his appearance to the Christian armies before the battle of Antioch, in which they were victorious, and to King Richard the Lionheart of England during his crusade against the Saracens.

St George is the patron of soldiers and of many nations, including Palestine, Lebanon, England, Georgia, and Malta. He is also the patron of Palestinian Christians and of Boy Scouts. He is invoked by sufferers of snakebites, skin diseases and rashes. Saint George stands out among other saints and legends because he is known and revered by both Muslims and Christians.

Remember to keep your distance from others and to observe proper hygiene...

- Catch it - sneeze into a tissue.
- Bin it – bin the tissue.
- Kill it – wash your hands with soap and water.
- Do not touch your face unless you’ve washed your hands.

SAINT GEORGE PATRON SAINT OF ENGLAND

The Cardinal has written to us to say that every Thursday evening at 7pm, one of the bishops of England & Wales, will celebrate Mass in his cathedral, live streamed, for all
those frontline workers in the NHS and care homes, for the sick and their families. This will begin next Thursday with Mass in our Cathedral. There will be more publicity about this in due course, but please keep an eye out and visit the English & Welsh bishops website at https://www.cbcew.org.uk/

A Poster Initiative has been launched inviting Christians to put a poster in their windows as a sign of faith and trust in the Lord in these troubled times. It could well encourage those who are downhearted. It is attractive and obtainable at this link: www.cte.org.uk/prayersofhope

Walsingham on-line Retreat An on-line retreat given by Mgr John Armitage will begin on 19 April and run through to the 26 April. Conferences will be 10 am and 4pm each day and will be available on the walsingham.org.uk website.

FEED your neighbour The FEED project needs your support more than ever in these difficult times, particularly as many vulnerable children will not have access to free school meals at present. Please consider making a money donation to FEED through www.bankuet.co.uk/feedstalbans or, if you can go shopping, please buy something extra and leave in the foodbank available at most supermarkets – tinned goods are particularly welcome.

Love and Feed our Neighbour - Thanks very much for your magnificent response to the appeal for food and essentials to support the work of the Vineyard in St Albans. Over 100 items were donated ranging from baby food to washing detergent, these goods will greatly help the 80 individuals/families a week served by the Vineyard who depend on their foodbank to feed their families. As our church has now closed due to the government regulations, we are unable to collect goods at present. However, if you do manage to go shopping please consider donating whatever you can spare into the foodbanks available at many supermarkets – if every family could donate just one tin, it would make a huge difference. In the last Mass held at our Church, we heard how we should love our neighbour, keeping our distance being one way, another, of course, is through practical aid. Indeed, Fr Jules Chevalier, founder of the MSCs urged us all to be on earth the heart of God and stressed that our love of neighbour should be tender-hearted and compassionate.

The Tablet We are aware that some parishioners would often buy the tablet weekly at the back of church, but whilst the lockdown is in effect, we have stopped supplying these papers. You can choose to subscribe to the Tablet, where they have quarterly, six monthly, or annual subscription options on offer. Go to https://www.thetablet.co.uk/subscribe or email Ian Farrar, the Tablet’s marketing Manager for more information ifarrar@thetablet.co.uk

Knit and Natter All knit and natter meetings are cancelled until further notice. Ladies do continue to knit at home - think what can be achieved in 12 weeks. Numerous blankets for the elderly, beanie hats for babies, twiddle muffs for those with dementia and wonderful stripy jumpers for the orphans in South Africa. If you need more wool contact Helen (07860 830340) and I can arrange for some to be delivered to you. Keep safe and well.

New year, new prayer life? Why not consider joining a small group to pray and share your thoughts and experiences in strict confidence. A friendly group meets on alternate Tuesday evenings at 8pm in the café area of the Hall. These meetings are currently suspended.

A Prayer for Spiritual Communion

Dear Guardian Angel,  
go for me to the church,  
there kneel down at Mass for me.  
At the Offertory, take me to God,  
and offer Him my service:  
What I am, what I have, offer as my gift.  
At the Consecration, with your seraphic strength,  
ador my Saviour truly present,  
praying for those who have loved me, 
for those who have offended me,  
and for those now deceased,  
that the blood of Jesus may purify them all.  
During Holy Communion,  
bring to me the Body and Blood of Jesus  
uniting Him with me in spirit, 
so that my heart may become His dwelling place.  
Plead with Him,  
that through His sacrifice  
all people throughout the world may be saved.  
When the Mass ends,  
bring home to me and to every home,  
the Lord’s blessing.  
Amen.