

ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

30th August 2020: Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

Hazel writes:

Last week I spoke about being political and prioritising equality, compassion and justice. This week I share with you news from two organisations we support who are doing just that:

- The Anglican Council of Zimbabwe, chaired by Bishop Ignatius, is working with the catholic church in Zimbabwe to speak against injustice, despite this prophetic role being dismissed by the Government of Zimbabwe. Pray for all in Zimbabwe, that their government will work with others for peace, stability and prosperity.
- West Wickham Rotary Club gave a presentation at our joint service in October last year about ending polio. This week Africa was certified as wild polio-free. Give thanks for this great public health achievement and pray that the remaining two countries who continue to see wild polio cases (Pakistan and Afghanistan) can become polio free, with others not becoming complacent as vaccinations are interrupted due to COVID-19.

On Wednesday 2nd, **Midweek Communion** will be at St Mary's at 10.45am. Next Sunday, 6th September there will be a service of **Holy Communion** in St Mary's at 8am and an **All-age Worship** service at 10am in St Francis'. There will also be a service available **on-line** from 9am.

Please note the **location of in-person services** above is different to that stated in the magazines. We plan for the services to alternate their location, with the 10am service always at St Francis' church on the first Sunday of each month. However, there will be instances where we will need to vary this pattern, so do follow what is in the pew sheets each week, or on-line.

Now that we have been open for **public worship** for a few weeks, more people are familiar with the arrangements within the buildings and we are hoping to make up rotas for volunteers to be involved in the 10am services. These volunteers will ensure that all the necessary social distancing and hygiene precautions are taken by everyone in the building. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Beryl at St Mary's on 020 8289 8097/bbolton@ntlworld.com or Joan at St Francis' on 020 8777 2034/jandbburford@talktalk.net.

Chere Sargon, a member of the congregation at St Francis', died on 9th August. Her funeral service will be in St Francis' Church on Friday 4th September at 3pm. The family

have said that those who knew Chere are welcome to attend the service, but please would you let Hazel (hazelos58@gmail.com or 020 8777 5034) know in advance if you would like to be there.

Joan Milne, who many of those from St Mary's will remember, had her ashes interred in Seaford Cemetery with those of her husband, Michael (see related picture), on Thursday of this past week.

The **St Francis' APCM** will take place after the service on Sunday 20th September, beginning at 11.45am. This meeting will be held both in church and on Zoom. All the papers for this meeting will be sent out by email in the next week, with hard copy to those who normally receive a paper copy of the pew sheet. If you would like a copy of these papers, but have not received something by 7th September, please contact Nicky Nightingale on 07771 782914/nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk.



Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage. Currently they need cold meat, custard, small bottles of squash, jelly, Instant Whip, mashed potatoes, jam, coffee, washing detergent, **male and female shampoo (very urgent)**, shaving gel/foam, adult & children's toothbrushes & toothpaste. There are large stocks of pasta, beans, soup, UHT milk, rice, cereals, tea, toilet rolls and tomatoes and these items are politely discouraged at the present time. Thank you for your continuing support.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – An audio file of the sermon and a video of the service have been posted to the websites for today. All other files have been combined and posted as a pew sheet which has been sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line. Other worship and resources that you might want to listen to or look at on Sunday:

- The Church of England's national virtual service will be available on their website at www.churchofengland.org.
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
 - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 - Paul Kerensa from the on-line Greenbelt Festival.
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 with St. Martin's Voices.
 - On BBC 1: Sunday Morning Live at 10.00 a.m. and Songs of Praise at 12.25 pm from Blenheim Palace.

Each week our **“coffee/tea & chat”** on Thursday at 2.30 pm is an opportunity to share with others. It is just 40 minutes and you don't need to commit to joining each week. Please let Rowena (rowena.griff19@btinternet.com /020 8777 6112) know if you would like the log-in details.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl bbolton@ntlworld.com and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com.

Collect

God of constant mercy,
 who sent your Son to save
 us:
 remind us of your
 goodness, increase your
 grace within us, that our
 thankfulness may grow,
 through Jesus Christ our
 Lord.

First Reading:

Romans 12: 9-end

⁹ Let love be genuine; hate
 what is evil, hold fast to
 what is good; ¹⁰ love one
 another with mutual
 affection; outdo one
 another in showing
 honour. ¹¹ Do not lag in zeal,
 be ardent in spirit, serve the
 Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be
 patient in suffering,
 persevere in
 prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the
 needs of the saints; extend
 hospitality to strangers.

¹⁴ Bless those who
 persecute you; bless and do
 not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice
 with those who rejoice,
 weep with those who
 weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony
 with one another; do not be
 haughty, but associate with
 the lowly; do not claim to
 be wiser than you are. ¹⁷ Do
 not repay anyone evil for
 evil, but take thought for

what is noble in the sight of
 all. ¹⁸ If it is possible, so far
 as it depends on you, live
 peaceably with all.

¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge
 yourselves, but leave room
 for the wrath of God; for it
 is written, 'Vengeance is
 mine, I will repay, says the
 Lord.' ²⁰ No, 'if your
 enemies are hungry, feed
 them; if they are thirsty,
 give them something to
 drink; for by doing this you
 will heap burning coals on
 their heads.' ²¹ Do not be
 overcome by evil, but
 overcome evil with good.

Gospel:

Matthew 16: 21-end

²¹ From that time on, Jesus
 began to show his disciples
 that he must go to
 Jerusalem and undergo
 great suffering at the hands
 of the elders and chief
 priests and scribes, and be
 killed, and on the third day
 be raised. ²² And Peter took
 him aside and began to
 rebuke him, saying, 'God
 forbid it, Lord! This must
 never happen to you.' ²³ But
 he turned and said to Peter,
 'Get behind me, Satan! You
 are a stumbling-block to
 me; for you are setting your

mind not on divine things
 but on human things.'

²⁴ Then Jesus told his
 disciples, 'If any want to
 become my followers, let
 them deny themselves and
 take up their cross and
 follow me. ²⁵ For those who
 want to save their life will
 lose it, and those who lose
 their life for my sake will
 find it. ²⁶ For what will it
 profit them if they gain the
 whole world but forfeit
 their life? Or what will they
 give in return for their life?

²⁷ 'For the Son of Man is to
 come with his angels in the
 glory of his Father, and then
 he will repay everyone for
 what has been
 done. ²⁸ Truly I tell you,
 there are some standing
 here who will not taste
 death before they see the
 Son of Man coming in his
 kingdom.'

Post Communion Prayer

God of all mercy,
 in this eucharist you have
 set aside our sins
 and given us your healing:
 grant that we who are
 made whole in Christ
 may bring that healing to
 this broken world,
 in the name of Jesus Christ
 our Lord.

REFLECTION for the 12th Sunday of Trinity

‘Get behind me, Satan!’ Surely this is the sternest rebuke to anyone in the whole Gospel, and to Peter of all people. After all in last week’s reading we heard that when Jesus asked his disciples who do people say the Son of Man is, it was Simon Peter who answered ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God’.

Jesus then answered him saying Blessed are you Simon son of Jonah, and I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

Yet now Peter is being treated as a personification of evil. Why should this be? If we delve deeper. ‘Get behind me’ is the same verb used elsewhere for ‘follow’. So, this is not just a rebuke; it is also a call to follow. Follow in the path of Jesus rather than the way of the world. To set his mind on divine things not on human things. If we now want to follow Jesus and want to know what setting our mind on divine things means we could not do much better than to read the Epistle that we have been given today.

Now God knows that we are not perfect and I for one fail in so many ways to do the right thing at the right time. Indulging in human pleasures and distractions when I should be doing more profitable things for God. But a blueprint of guidance that we are given in Romans is a good reminder to point me in the right direction.

It outlines what we should be doing and the advice comes thick and fast. So fast that is so easy to read it quickly and for no more than an idea of what is being said to stick in our minds.

So let us for a moment take each statement and think about it.

Let love be genuine – We must be sincere in showing our love to one another. This doesn’t mean gushing love or a false love to those that we don’t really like. But a real open love and understanding for all.

Hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good – We must be able to discern good and evil. Even if we are called to love we must not ignore or condone evil acts. And we must hold fast to what we believe is good even if it goes against the grain of what is believed by others or society in general. It is not always easy to stand up for what is right,

especially in these days when people are shouted down on social media if their views don't accord with the mainstream.

Love one another with mutual affection – This is like family love. To love other Christians as if they were in your own family.

Giving time to others, listening to them to hear what they are really saying, not being judgemental and being concerned for their wellbeing.

Outdo one another in showing honour – whilst not putting yourself down, think of others being better than yourself and show them respect. It can be easy to respect those who are powerful and have status in society. But not so easy when the person has no status. These are often important people in keeping society going as we have seen with the key workers and how they have served us during lockdown.

Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit in serving the Lord. Be an enthusiastic follower without being fanatical. After all sometimes the fanatical put people off the very thing they are promoting. There is no need to be a perfectionist and certainly no need to criticise anyone who don't think is up to our standard. But have a faith that shows as a glow for the Holy Spirit or even a bubbling over of spiritual zeal. Remembering that this is not to be self-serving but in order that we might serve God.

Verse twelve is packed with three statements; Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer – Though we should be thankful for the hope that we have that we are doing God's will and the hope in the second coming but meanwhile there will be times when that hope is challenged by the troubles of the world. That can be especially true when we or those near us suffer and as a nation we are going through a time of suffering in so many ways, physically, mentally and spiritually. We are being advised to be patient during a time of suffering and always bring our hopes and needs to God in prayer. Prayer is so important. Sometimes we might find prayer easy as we talk to God and at other times it might seem a struggle as we don't feel we are being listened to. But we must believe that God is listening and through our perseverance in prayer we will get answers.

Next we have contribute to the needs of the saints – Where we see that there is a need and feel that God is guiding us to meet that need, whether it be financial or other resources that are required we should give and we should do it with a generous heart.

Extend hospitality to strangers – To visitors whether known or not known to you, hospitality is an indispensable expression of love. Paul was urging Romans not just to practise hospitality but to positively pursue it. Enquire after and look carefully for strangers and meet their needs.

Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them – As Jesus said to his disciples that they should bless those who curse us and even pray for them and do good to them. Sometimes that can lead to the turning around of the hardest of hearts. Certainly not an easy thing to do but we should demonstrate good will to all people.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep – We should be known as people who will come alongside their neighbour in times of both celebration and joy but also at moments of sadness where sympathy is needed. This can be easy at a time of happiness but a challenge to come near people at difficult times. Not knowing what to say and how you will be received. Yet so often it is just your presence, your showing concern that is what is needed.

Live in harmony with one another – Having a common mind with our fellow Christians so that we can work effectively together in God's work. That must be especially true as we work as a United Benefice to serve the people of West Wickham and the surrounding areas.

Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly, do not claim to be wiser than you are – We should show a bit of humility and not be proud or snobbish and not condescending. It's not a question of status for we are all children of God.

The final verses are about our relationship with our enemies. We have already had do not curse. We then have the other strong negatives:

- Do not repay anyone evil for evil but live at peaceably with all,
- Never avenge yourselves but leave room for the wrath of God and
- Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

It is all too easy to want to curse someone who wrongs you or even persecutes you and it is natural to want to retaliate in the heat of the moment and even wanting to do something evil to someone in return for an evil. Or we may want to gain revenge in some way. But we are told to leave that to God who sees all and knows all.

And although it seems strange and is difficult, where there has been evil, a good act can change the situation and may make someone change their ways.

What all these pieces of advice have been doing is showing us how we can help to bring God's love into our world.

As Hazel said last week 'If we are really part of the church, built on the revelation that Jesus is the Messiah we do need to free ourselves from the ways of this world and allow our identity in Christ to drive our behaviours – in our own lives and in our community'.

Amen

Prayer Pointers

Pray that our two churches of St Mary's and St Francis may be places where love and harmony abounds. Pray that we may learn to serve one another in all humility and not seek power, authority and status in our relationships with each other.

Pray for those who will form the new 'Vision Group' in our benefice – that the Holy Spirit may inspire their discussions to find new ways of moving forward and bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to West Wickham.

For Governments across the world that they may promote peace and harmony overcoming conflict with good. Pray especially for the USA as they approach their presidential election in November – that truth and honesty may be at the forefront of the election campaign.

For all those who will be returning to school for the new term – for students and teachers as they learn new ways of working to reduce the risk of Covid19 infection. Pray especially for those who are fearful of returning – teachers, parents and students – that their fears may be calmed.

For all those who have experienced flooding and damage in the wake of Storm Francis – those whose homes and businesses have been affected. For all the emergency services giving assistance and especially for the lifeboat crews who have to venture out on stormy seas to rescue those in difficulty.

For all those who are ill, remembering those we know and love who are closest to us. Pray especially for all those suffering the after effects of Covid19 – those who are suffer constant fatigue and those doctors and nurses on the front lines whose mental health has been affected. Pray and give thanks for our local NHS who have worked tirelessly to deal with the crisis.