

**THE PARISH OF ST MATTHEW
LITTLE LEVER**

'Church for a different world'

Sunday 29 March 2020

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Worship Today

Following the Prime Minister's directive, the church will be closed until further notice.

Although we cannot meet to worship, we hope people will continue to offer worship and prayer from the privacy of our own homes.



Fr Anthony has offered Mass on our behalf. This Mass will be posted to our Facebook page from 9am on Sunday morning.

Please visit and join in this Mass as best you can.

Our Facebook page is being updated regularly during the course of the week, it is visible to **ANYBODY** without needing to be a registered Facebook member.

www.facebook.com/SaintMatthewsLittleLever/

If you would like help accessing Facebook to keep in touch with us at Saint Matthews, please speak to Fr Anthony who will arrange for somebody who is familiar with Facebook to contact you.



We are hoping to continue to produce a pew sheet each week to distribute to people in order to keep in touch and hold together members of St. Matthew's Congregation during these difficult times. However, because of the increased restrictions expecting people to stay at home, we are not able to produce a paper pew sheet. It would be helpful if those who receive it on-line could phone up those without on-line access and bring them up to date with anything they need to know. The jungle drums in Little Lever are generally pretty good !



Things are now very different from what they were this time last week following the Prime Minister's directive to close places of worship. So, the church will not be open on Sunday. Do keep an eye on the TV and see what services are being televised. Mass is not being offered each day in our church. However, the clergy will remember us all as they offer morning and evening prayer each day privately.

Good News about Fr. John

Fr. John has been tested in hospital and he has **NOT** got coronavirus. The results came back negative and he has been moved to a ward with other patients whose results also were negative. That is excellent news. However, he will still be in hospital for a few days with a chest infection. He thanks everyone for their concern, good wishes and prayers.

Help locally

Please let Fr. Anthony know if you are willing to help any elderly isolated people with shopping etc.. or if you need some help yourself. Similarly, if you know of anyone who might need help, but you cannot give it yourself, please let Fr. Anthony or Fr. John have their details. Although we may be prevented from calling in person on friends and the folk we know, we can always keep in touch on the telephone and by email. I am sure that it is the wish of us all that nobody is forgotten.

Today's Readings

The readings for today's mass are included with this pew sheet. Please read them and use the accompanying information and reflections in your prayers. It is still Lent, when we focus more on our prayers. We can use this time of enforced isolation as a gift from God to give us the opportunity to do just that.

Today's Gospel

In today's gospel we see a scene we are all familiar with, namely, people weeping over the death of a loved one. In this reading, Jesus is the centre of that scene. He is the one who gives hope to those who are surrounded by the shadow of death. There are only two weeks to go until Easter and all the readings today speak of resurrection. Death represents a wall which prevents us from seeing what is beyond it. In today's gospel, with the raising of Lazarus, we see Jesus giving us a glimpse of how he can pull down that wall.

Parish Prayer Diary

Sunday	For our parish's continued growth
Monday	For those made unemployed by the present crisis.
Tuesday	For Bolton Royal Hospital.
Wednesday	For the work of food banks.
Thursday	For the bereaved
Friday	For those persecuted for their faith.
Saturday	For Walsingham

Please pray for those who are sick:

Joan Fowles, David Fowles, David Seed, Martin Wild, Margaret Hall, William Gill, Adrian Charles, Cathy Nurse, Dale Clegg, Albert Yates, Carol Schooling, Craig Williams, Kerry Dunn, Fay Bidy, Ron Burrige, Christine Smith, Winifred Hardman, Barbara Callaghan, Raymond Bell, John Gradwell, Lily Rose Bury, Kevan Russell, Barbara Bell, Joan Hallows, Mavis Schofield, Stephen Winterbottom, Rita Weston, Roy Costello, Fr. John.



Please pray for those who have died.

Recently departed:

Rowland Hill, Inez Taylor

Those whose anniversaries occur at this time:

Peggy Brandwood, Thomas Haslam, Frank James Sherman, Margaret Morrison, Elly Dawes, Natasha Amber Robinson Leigh, Leonard Wright.

The Sanctuary Lamp burns this week in loving memory of:

Margaret Gorton and Leonard Wright

A safe and welcoming Church

St. Matthew's has offered a warm welcome to everyone since 1865. The PCC is committed to ensuring that everyone at St. Matthew's is safe and supported. We take safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults very seriously. Therefore, if you have any concerns please speak to:

Fr. John - 01204 700936

Margaret Barnard - 01204 709742

Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser

Abbey Clephane – Wilson 0161 828 1451

Thought for the Day:



Parish Clergy

Fr. John Wiseman – 700936

Canon Ian Anthony -791437

Fr. Stuart Haworth – 834006.



This week's readings

Listed below are the readings appointed for the daily mass this week. Please find time to read them as well as the accompanying few words of commentary.

Daily Readings

Monday

Old Testament: Daniel 13: 1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33 -41, 41 – 62

Gospel: John 8 : 1 – 11

In these readings we are faced with the issues of condemnation and forgiveness. In the first reading we have a popular Jewish story warning against adultery, false witness and the abuse of power. In the end, the false accusers of the innocent woman are condemned themselves. In the gospel story, we are shown that Jesus does not give up on sinners. He continues to speak to them in a dialogue of grace and forgiveness and invites them to love. Sin is not minimized, but God's forgiveness is shown to be greater than our human attitude to those who sin.

Tuesday

Old Testament: Numbers 21 4-9 Gospel: John 8: 21 -30

In the first reading we read of how the Jews were wandering in the desert and grumbling about what God was expecting of them. He sent a plague of serpents to bring them to heel. They repented of their lack of trust in God and asked Moses to speak to God on their behalf. Moses was instructed to erect a bronze serpent, so that people could express their faith in God by looking at the serpent and so be saved from the deadly bite of the serpents. In the gospel reading the Pharisees are told that they must accept Jesus if they are to be saved. We must look up to the cross of Jesus with eyes of faith in the same way that the Jews were asked to look upon the serpent held by Moses. We, the church, must be a similar be a sign of salvation.

Wednesday

Old Testament: Daniel 3:14 – 21, 91 – 95 & 95 Gospel: John 8: 31 -42

Today we have the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego facing the fiery furnace because they stood firm in their faith. We admire their bravery and think of those in our own day who face persecution because of their faith. Like the faith of Abraham, our faith in Jesus should be deep and unconditional. We pray that our faith will

remain strong in times of great testing and difficulty.

Thursday

Old Testament: Genesis 17: 3 – 9. Gospel: John 8: 51 - 59

Today we read of the covenant God made with Abraham because of Abraham's faith. Our communion with God, our salvation, depends on faith. God makes an offer to us of a covenant, but it involves a faith which trusts in him. Abraham believed God's word and his faith changed the destiny of himself and of his people. God speaks to us through his Word, Jesus Christ. If we believe in him we become the new people of the new covenant by baptism - and the promised land will be ours.

Friday

Old Testament: Jeremiah 20 : 11- 13 Gospel: John 10 : 31 – 42

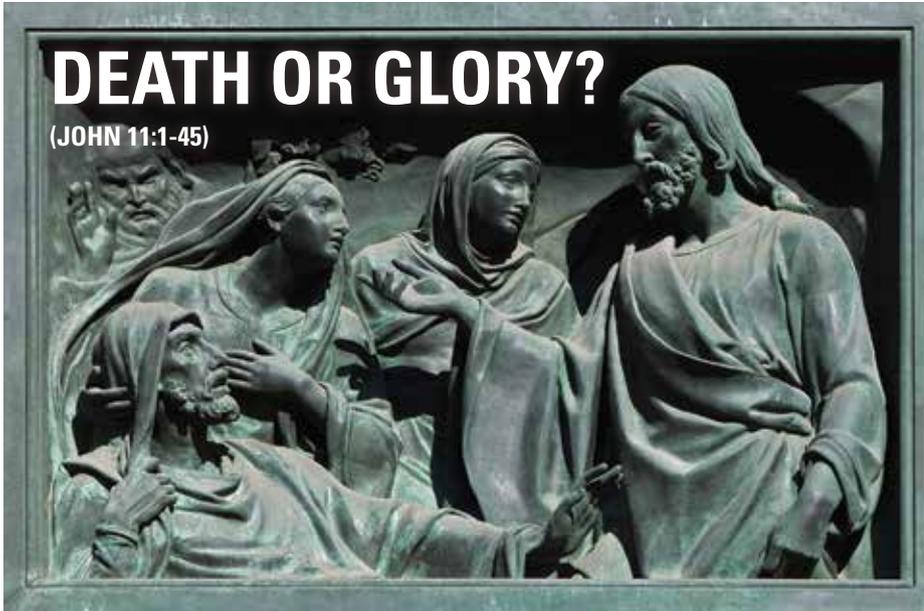
Jesus, the Son of God, showed in his life and actions that he was no ordinary human being, even in the face of opposition and contradiction. Christians who take their faith seriously will also meet opposition and contradiction. They cannot compromise if this would be tantamount to dishonesty or betrayal with themselves, with their faith, or with others. But they know that they are in God's hands. Their deeds will speak for themselves. With Jesus, God's Son, we may do the work the Father has entrusted to us.

Saturday

Old Testament: Ezekiel 37: 21 – 28 Gospel: John 11 : 45 – 57

In our first reading we hear how Ezekiel preaches a utopian dream to the people who had been exiled. Israel would be gathered into one: one nation, one land, one sanctuary, ruled by one shepherd and servant king under one God in a covenant of peace. After the resurrection of Lazarus (Martha and Mary's brother whom Jesus had brought back to life from the dead) the cynical high priest and other leaders decided to put Jesus to death for political reasons.





The raising of Lazarus: fragment of a door in Isaak Cathedral in St. Petersburg, Russia

The raising of Lazarus is the last and greatest of the signs which Jesus gives. It is also the catalyst which sets in motion the process by which Jesus is brought to the cross.

Jesus knows this and declares that Lazarus' sickness will not end in death but in God's glory and the glorification of Jesus as God's Son. So Jesus does not set out immediately to cure Lazarus of his illness, as he is responding to the will of the Father: the purpose of the sign will not be the restoring of Lazarus to life, but rather that the disciples may come to true faith.

The disciples refer to Jesus as "Rabbi", which suggests that their belief in Jesus is still imperfect. Martha appears in the story as the sister who takes the initiative, going to confront Jesus and stating her belief in the general resurrection of the dead. Jesus tells her that the resurrection is not an event but a person, namely himself. Many scholars see Martha's response to Jesus' question – "Do you believe this?" – as the Johannine equivalent of Peter's confession in the other Gospel accounts. Mary, on the other hand, acts in accordance with the word of Jesus, going to him when he calls her, as the sheep responds to the voice of the shepherd.

In his prayer to the Father, Jesus repeats his statement that the purpose of the sign is to bring those who witness it to believe that Jesus is the one whom God has sent, and as a result, many of the Jews believe in him. ■

SAY

Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world

(John 11:27)

LEARN

Details of the burial circumstances of Lazarus, such as the stone over the entrance, the cloths around him and over his face, correspond to those of the burial place of Jesus.

The differences are worth noting: the stone rolled away, the cloths on the ground, the face cloth rolled up in a separate place.

These suggest that the two events are radically different: Lazarus is restored to the life he had lost and will have to die again; the resurrection of Jesus is of a different order completely.

DO

Take a piece of cloth in your hands. Think about the sign of the raising of Lazarus. Make an act of faith in Jesus as the resurrection and the life for you.



REFLECT

Jesus' gift of life to his dead friend is the event which sets off the plot to do away with him. In an additional twist of irony, the Jewish leaders will decide to assassinate Lazarus as well. This is the last of the readings which are given in this time when candidates are preparing to join our community as full members. In it we hear the promise of Jesus that he is, in himself, the resurrection and the life for his disciples. The raising of Lazarus will indeed lead

to the death of Jesus: but for John the evangelist, the crucifixion is a triumph; it is the lifting up, the exaltation of Jesus in glory, it is his hour, the purpose for which he came. The Easter mystery is fulfilled on the cross.

Throughout the narrative, Jesus is presented in a highly emotional state, which is unusual in the Fourth Gospel. His grief and distress may be caused by the death of someone he loved, but also,

perhaps, by frustration at the obtuseness of those who, like Thomas, keep on misunderstanding the real significance of what he says and does.

When we listen to, or read, the Scriptures, we are invited to make the Word of God relevant to our own faith, our own lives. Which character in the Gospel story do we most resemble? How can we become closer disciples of Jesus? ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**Give me justice, O God,
and plead my cause against a nation that is
faithless.**

**From the deceitful and cunning rescue me,
for you, O God, are my strength.**

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 37:12-14

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel.

The Lord says this: "I am now going to open your graves; I mean to raise you from your graves, my people, and lead you back to the soil of Israel. And you will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people. And I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live, and I shall resettle you on your own soil; and you will know that I, the Lord, have said and done this – it is the Lord who speaks."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 129

Response:

**With the Lord there is mercy
and fullness of redemption.**

1. Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,
Lord, hear my voice!
O let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my pleading. (R.)
2. If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,
Lord, who would survive?
But with you is found forgiveness:
for this we revere you. (R.)
3. My soul is waiting for the Lord,
I count on his word.
My soul is longing for the Lord
more than watchman for daybreak.
(Let the watchman count on daybreak
and Israel on the Lord.) (R.)
4. Because with the Lord there is mercy
and fullness of redemption,
Israel indeed he will redeem
from all its iniquity. (R.)

SECOND READING

Romans 8:8-11

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans.

People who are interested only in unspiritual things can never be pleasing to God. Your interests, however, are not in the unspiritual, but in the spiritual, since the Spirit of God has made his home in you. In fact, unless you possessed the Spirit of Christ you would not belong to him. Though your body may be dead it is because of sin, but if Christ is in you then your spirit is life itself because you have been justified; and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Glory and praise to you, O Christ!

**I am the resurrection and the life, says the
Lord;**

whoever believes in me will never die.

Glory and praise to you, O Christ!

GOSPEL

John 11:1-45

(For shorter form read between >>)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

There was a man named Lazarus who lived in the village of Bethany with his two sisters, Mary and Martha, and he was ill. It was the same Mary, the sister of the sick man Lazarus, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair. >The sisters sent this message to Jesus, "Lord, the man you love is ill." On receiving the message, Jesus said, "This sickness will end, not in death but in God's glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified."

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus; yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, "Let us go to Judaea." < The disciples said, "Rabbi, it is not long since the Jews wanted to stone you; are you going back again?" Jesus replied;

"Are there not twelve hours in the day?
A man can walk in the daytime without
stumbling
because he has the light of this world to
see by;
but if he walks at night he stumbles,
because there is no light to guide him."

He said that and then added, "Our friend Lazarus is resting, I am going to wake him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he is able to rest he is sure to get better." The phrase Jesus used referred to the death of Lazarus, but they thought that by "rest" he meant "sleep", so Jesus put it plainly, "Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad I was not there because now you will believe. But let us go to him." Then Thomas – known as the Twin – said to the other disciples, "Let us go too, and die with him."

> On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already.< Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to sympathise with them over their brother. >When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God he will grant you." "Your brother" said Jesus to her "will rise again." Martha said, "I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said:

"I am the resurrection, and the life.
If anyone believes in me, even though he
dies he will live,
and whoever lives and believes in me
will never die.
Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord," she said "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world." <

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in a low voice, "The Master is here and wants to see you." Hearing this, Mary got up quickly and went to him. Jesus had not yet come into the village; he was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were in the house sympathising with Mary saw her get up so quickly and go out, they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

Mary went to Jesus, and as soon as she saw him she threw herself at his feet, saying, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother

would not have died." At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, >Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, "Where have you put him?" They said, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept; and the Jews said, "See how much he loved him!" But there were some who remarked, "He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man's death?" Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, "Take the stone away." Martha said to him, "Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day." Jesus replied, "Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said:

"Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I knew indeed that you always hear me. But I speak for the sake of all these who stand around me, so that they may believe it was you who sent me."

When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, "Lazarus, here! Come out!" The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them "Unbind him, let him go free." Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

The Gospel of the Lord.<

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)**

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there 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 life everlasting.
Amen.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Hear us, almighty God,
and, having instilled in your servants
the teachings of the Christian faith,
graciously purify them
by the working of this sacrifice.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Everyone who lives and believes in me
will not die for ever, says the Lord.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We pray, almighty God,
that we may always be counted among the
members of Christ,
in whose Body and Blood we have
communion.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**