

# Our Sunday Service Together

## Easter 2 April 19<sup>th</sup> 2020



*Today, as we enter into our Easter Season Worship, together yet apart, we will 'make a Spiritual Communion' and Christ, through the Spirit with us, will mediate the grace of God to us in fullness.*

*Clinging to the Jesus who was is not possible, but touching the risen Christ is possible – seeing his glory is enough, but believing is best of all!*

### An Acclamation for the Season of Easter

All: It is our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give you thanks, almighty and eternal Father, and especially in these days of Easter to celebrate with joyful hearts the memory of your wonderful works.

For by the mystery of his passion Jesus Christ, your risen Son, has conquered the powers of death and hell and restored in men and women the image of your glory. He has placed them once more in paradise and opened to them the gate of life eternal. And so earth and heaven resound with gladness, while angels and archangels and the powers of all creation sing for ever the hymn of your glory.

### Hymn For all the Saints

### Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.  
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body  
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to 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.

## Our Confession

*In baptism we died with Christ, so that as Christ was raised from the dead, we might walk in newness of life. Let us receive new life in him as we confess our sins in penitence and faith.*

All: 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, 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, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.  
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

*Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ*

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord.

**Amen.**

## The opening prayer

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

*Silence is kept.*

All: 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.

## The Word of God

Psalmody Psalm 16 *We say the psalm aloud*

Preserve me, O God, for in you have I taken refuge;  
I have said to the Lord, 'You are my lord, all my good depends on you.'  
All my delight is upon the godly that are in the land, upon those who are noble in heart.  
Though the idols are legion that many run after, their drink offerings of blood I will not offer,  
neither make mention of their names upon my lips.  
The Lord himself is my portion and my cup; in your hands alone is my fortune.

My share has fallen in a fair land; indeed, I have a goodly heritage.  
I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel, and in the night watches he instructs my heart.  
I have set the Lord always before me; he is at my right hand; I shall not fall.  
Wherefore my heart is glad and my spirit rejoices; my flesh also shall rest secure.  
For you will not abandon my soul to Death, nor suffer your faithful one to see the Pit.  
You will show me the path of life; in your presence is the fullness of joy  
and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and  
ever shall be, world without end. Amen

### Scripture Reading Acts 2.14a and 22-32

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them (the crowd)

<sup>22</sup> ‘You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man  
attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through  
him among you, as you yourselves know — <sup>23</sup> this man, handed over to you according  
to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of  
those outside the law. <sup>24</sup> But God raised him up, having freed him from death, <sup>[C]</sup> because  
it was impossible for him to be held in its power. <sup>25</sup> For David says concerning him,  
“I saw the Lord always before me,  
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;  
<sup>26</sup> therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover, my flesh will live in  
hope.  
<sup>27</sup> For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience  
corruption.  
<sup>28</sup> You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with  
your presence.”  
<sup>29</sup> ‘Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died  
and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. <sup>30</sup> Since he was a prophet, he knew  
that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his  
throne. <sup>31</sup> Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,  
“He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.”  
<sup>32</sup> This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

*At the end of the reading we say:*

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

## Gloria

All: 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 Gospel      John 20.19 - 31

*Alleluia, alleluia. Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.' Alleluia.*

<sup>19</sup> When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' <sup>22</sup> When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

<sup>24</sup> But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

*Alleluia, alleluia. Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.' Alleluia.*

## A Reflection for the day    Rev John Webb writes;

I am delighted to be writing this reflection, because it was on St Thomas's Day fifty-two years ago that I was ordained priest in St Paul's Cathedral and ever since then Thomas has been my guide and inspiration.

We don't know very much about St Thomas except the story we have just read. It was only a few days since Jesus has been crucified. The apostles must have been in a state of complete shock – they had just experienced a very traumatic week. They had been with Jesus for about three years and must have got to know and love him and see him as the promised messiah who would save the world. This seemed to be confirmed when he had entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and was welcomed as a hero by the crowds – it must have seemed that his hour had come. Then everything went wrong – in less than a week he was betrayed, arrested, tried and crucified. The apostles hadn't exactly covered themselves with glory as they deserted him and hid away when the going got difficult. It looks as if they had given up and were going back to their homes totally disillusioned by the whole experience.

Then there was that amazing resurrection appearance which must have thrown them into complete turmoil. Thomas wasn't with the other apostles but when he returned, he found them in a state of euphoric excitement. But Thomas isn't convinced – he is the voice of reason and asks them to calm down and look logically at the situation. Then Jesus comes again and gives him the reassurance he is asking for.

As a result of this incident Thomas has been branded as Doubting Thomas. I think that is very unfair. In every other aspect of our lives we are expected to have enquiring minds – to assess the evidence and come to a logical conclusion. In our schools and universities, we encourage students to look at the facts, weigh the evidence and come to a fair conclusion.

And that is what Thomas was doing, so why is he forever damned as doubting? The inference seems to be that when it comes to our faith we are expected to switch off our critical faculties and accept whatever we are told without question. If we dare to ask question or express doubts our faith is in some way inadequate.

This was a great problem for me because as long as I could remember I had felt a very strong vocation to serve the church – but it seemed to me that in order to fulfill that vocation I would have to accept many ideas about which I had serious doubts and be a bit like the Queen in 'Alice in wonderland' who said she could believe six impossible things before breakfast.

So it was through reading this story I realized that it was alright to have doubts. Mine no longer seemed that important and that they could be left on the shelf for the moment and sorted out at a later date. And I have to say that 50 years on there are still quite a lot on the shelf!

Talking to people I often find that they have the same problem – they feel attracted by Jesus but have problems with the way the churches seem to present him and the faith. Certainly, some of the things we're seeing and hearing on our TV's being said by the Bible Belt Christians in America are enough to put any thinking person off.

But to get back to St Thomas - he asked for proof and he was given it. And I think that in this scientific age he shouldn't be condemned as doubting Thomas but celebrated as Honest Tom.

He asked for proof and was given it. We can't be given the same proof, but I suggest we can be given other evidence of a different kind.

We can see the lives of people in every generation inspired and changed by Jesus.

We can see a world which has been profoundly influenced by His life and teaching.

We can see a church which, in spite of its obvious weaknesses and failures, still witnesses to him after two thousand years.

I believe those with eyes to see can still see God at work in the world.

And finally, a delightful postscript to the story of St Thomas. When the first missionaries went to India in the 18<sup>th</sup> C, to their surprise they found a flourishing Christian community there already. The tradition of that church is that St Thomas had travelled there and founded the church which still proudly bears his name. So, for them, and for me, he isn't Doubting Thomas, but a much-respected founding father of the Church.

## The Creed

All: 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.

*Prayers*                      *We make our intercessions*

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ let us pray to the Father.

O God of peace, who has taught us that in quietness and confidence shall be our strength; help us, as we come into your presence, to be still and know that you are God.

*A sentence of scripture*

*Thomas answered Jesus 'My Lord and my God'. Jesus said 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe'.*

Strengthen Peter our Bishop and all those who seek to find new ways to minister the eternal truths in these uncertain times.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

We give thanks for all those who have spread the good news throughout the ages. Those who wrote, printed and transmitted the bible. We pray for those who expound the Gospel to this generation in Churches, Schools, Colleges and Universities that they may have enthusiasm and wisdom. And we pray for those who are struggling with their faith.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

We Pray for Our Queen, Prime Minister and all World leaders, that they may have wisdom to lead us through this difficult time.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

We pray for the sick, suffering and dying ..... and we give thanks and pray for those who use their skill and risk their lives to care for them.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

We pray for our families, friends and neighbours that we may serve Christ in one another and seek the common good.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Hear us as we remember those who have died..... According to your promises grant them a share in your eternal kingdom.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Rejoicing in the fellowship of St Thomas and all your saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love. Amen.

### *A Prayer during the Covid-19 Pandemic*

All: 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.**

### *The Collect for St Thomas*

All: Almighty and eternal God, who for the firmer foundation of our faith didst suffer thy holy Apostle Thomas to be doubtful in thy Son's resurrection till word and sight convinced him: grant to us, who have not seen, to believe in thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in thy sight may never be reprov'd. Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

*Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us*

All: 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.

## The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.  
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.  
Christ under me, Christ over me;  
Christ beside me on my left and my right.  
This day be within and without me.  
Amen.