

Weekly Newsletter During the Covid-19 Pandemic 24th May 2020

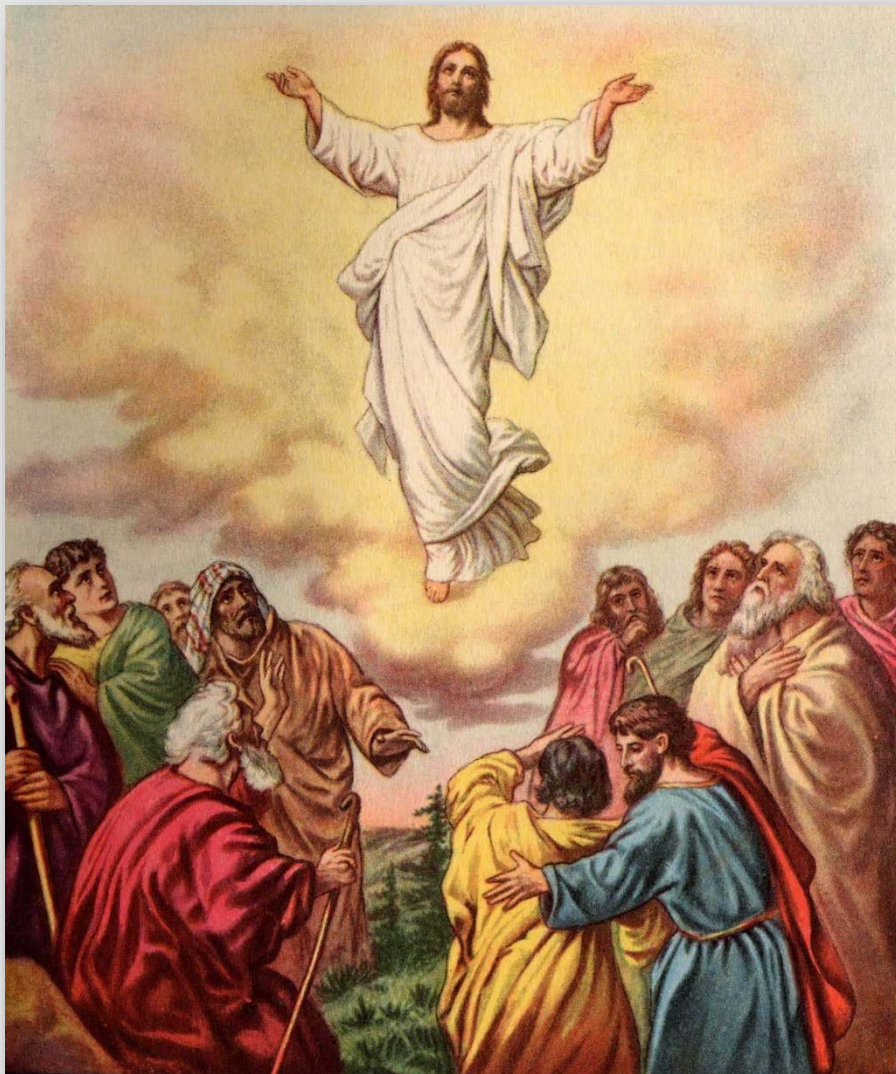
Joint Parishes of St Joseph's and St Wilfrid's Gateshead

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And He ascended into Heaven where He sits at God's right hand



Know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time

Today is the 7th Sunday of Easter

Readings for today are: -

First Reading	Acts 1:12-14
Responsorial Psalm	Psalm 26
Second Reading	1 Peter 4:13-16
Alleluia	John 14:18
Gospel	John 17:1-11

"I will not leave you orphans"

There came a time after the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection when the Risen Lord was no longer apparent to the disciples as they went about their task proclaiming the Good News. The writer of Luke's gospel commences his second book The Acts of the Apostles with the apostles, after 40 days, looking on as Jesus disappears from their midst, and forever. They're asked, 'Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking into the sky?' At the end of Matthew's gospel, the 11 disciples had set out for Galilee where Jesus commanded them, 'Go, make disciples of all the nations; teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.' We are still in that time. The risen Jesus has disappeared from our midst. We have a commission to bring good news to everyone, teaching them to observe the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount which take up and fulfil the teachings of the Torah with a universalism of love and justice which is impractical and unattainable without God's grace. We are commissioned to tell anyone willing to listen that the Lord is with us, through thick and thin, through life and death. We are commissioned to proclaim a way of living that can bring fulfilment to all. In the age of the coronavirus and in the face of global challenges like pollution, climate change, water shortages, loss of biodiversity, global inequality, and the decline of the quality of human life and the breakdown of society, we face many challenges. The catalogue of "nasties" listed are the matters canvassed by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si* which he issued five years ago today. The encyclical subtitled *On Care for Our Common Home* is addressed to 'every person living on this planet'. (LS3) 'Laudato Si, mi Signore - Praise be to you, my Lord', are the opening words of the encyclical and they come from the canticle of Francis of Assisi described by the pope as 'the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically'. (LS10) Pope Francis urges us to approach nature and the environment with 'openness to awe and wonder', speaking 'the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world'. (LS11) In some

ways the Ascension opens for us a relationship between God and creation, our theology of the natural world must be 'robust enough to deal with randomness and contingency'. It also has to come to terms with the costs of evolution over the last 3.8-billion-year history of life: 'the loss, the pain, the predation, the deaths, and the extinctions of most species that ever lived'. This cannot be done by putting human beings at the centre or on the top of the pyramid of creation. We need to see that other creatures have value in themselves. They, like us, reveal something of God. They, with us, 'form a sublime communion of creation in God' (LS89). Pope Francis tells us that 'all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another'. (LS42) He urges us to 'forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute dominion over other creatures.' (LS67) 'Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness'. God enfolds every creature with his affection. (LS77). Marking the fifth anniversary of this encyclical at this time near the feast of the Ascension, we can see new meaning in the Ascended Christ, appreciating that 'The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things.' (LS83) It's a novel experience to contemplate that we are 'joined in a splendid universal communion' with all creation. (LS220) As we contemplate the sight of the ascending Jesus with the onlooking apostles, we can expand our vision and theirs appreciating that 'Christ has taken unto himself this material world and now, risen, is intimately present to each being, surrounding it with his affection and penetrating it with his light.' (LS 221). We don't need to be fortune tellers and mystics to realise that the horrific natural occurrences of recent times; the unprecedented bush fires in Australia; the floods on biblical scale in Europe; the coronavirus pandemic are all due to climate change, it is real and has drastic consequences for us and our world. No one now seriously doubts that human activity contributes to climate change. The disagreement is over the extent to which human activity exacerbates the situation and the extent to which any human planning can mitigate the adverse effects. Most people now accept that human activity makes the situation worse. No one seriously argues that the emission of greenhouse gases makes the situation better. But what is to be done? We need to attend to politics and economics. Pope Francis does not pretend to have all the answers. No one should use the pulpit to evangelise just one set of answers when there are many options. In *Laudato Si*, Francis says (LS60): [W]e need to acknowledge that different approaches and lines of thought have emerged regarding this situation and its possible solutions. At

one extreme, we find those who doggedly uphold the myth of progress and tell us that ecological problems will solve themselves simply with the application of new technology and without any need for ethical considerations or deep change. At the other extreme are those who view men and women and all their interventions as no more than a threat, jeopardizing the global ecosystem, and consequently the presence of human beings on the planet should be reduced and all forms of intervention prohibited. Viable future scenarios will have to be generated between these extremes, since there is no one path to a solution. This makes a variety of proposals possible, all capable of entering dialogue with a view to developing comprehensive solutions. *Laudato Si* provides us with 'the basis for a systematic theology of the natural world, in which other creatures have value in themselves, in which they can be seen as revealing God, and in which they, with us, form a sublime communion of creation in God.' The apostles on Ascension Day did not just continue staring into the sky when Jesus disappeared. They set about their mission and were filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Once the virus abates, let us get out there, spreading the good news to all people of good will. Let us embrace the whole of creation which is 'moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fulness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things.' The Ascension bids us to remember we are never alone, for Jesus is with us in every step that we take, we need to have courage to change the things that we can change for the better, the 'status quo' is not an option when that status is damaging to the world or those we love.



He holds the whole world in His hands

Today is Sunday after The Ascension (EF)

Readings for today are: -

<i>Introit</i>	<i>Psalm 26. 7-9</i>
<i>Epistle 1</i>	<i>Peter 1 4.7-11</i>
<i>Greater Alleluia</i>	<i>Psalms 46.9</i>
<i>Gospel</i>	<i>John 15; 26-27 16; 1-4</i>

*Almighty and everlasting God make us ever bear a devout affection toward Thee, and
with a sincere heart to serve Thy Majesty*

We have now entered Ascensiontide, that time of waiting between Our Lord's Ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Sunday's readings tell us this is a time of prayer and good works that will prepare us to be sent out into the world.

Sunday's Epistle, from St. Peter's First Letter, tells us to "watch in prayers." That is what the Apostles were doing after the Ascension: following the command of Christ to "wait for the promise of the Father... [to be] baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 1:4-5). This is the fulfilment of what Christ told them at the Last Supper, that he would "send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father" (John 15:26). As the Apostles prepared to go out into the world, Our Lord reminded them of the foundation of any work done in his name: prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We depend completely on the Holy Spirit to do good works, as well as to persist in the Christian faith despite the world's opposition.

After St. Peter writes that we should "watch in prayers," he then commands, "Before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves, for charity covers a multitude of sins." Here we see the intrinsic connection between faith and works, a connection the Protestant reformers tragically severed. If we pray but are not charitable, our prayers are useless; if we try to be charitable but do not pray, we are doomed to fail, for we need the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome our fallen nature. So, as we await the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we pray for strength and we live out our prayers in works of charity. Charity and faith cannot be separated; as St. Ambrose writes, "The one who sins does not love, for love covers a multitude of sins. Love cuts out the desire to sin, and since it also casts out fear, it is obviously full of perfect faith" (*Letters to Priests*, 48).

In Sunday's Gospel we see another way in which the Holy Spirit is a necessary part of the Christian life. After Christ tells his disciples that he will send the Spirit to them, he says that they will "give testimony." In other words, they will preach the Gospel to the ends of the world, working to convert all peoples to Christ. But such a testimony will be resisted by the world, and Jesus even says that "whosoever kills you will think that he does a service to God." It is humanly impossible to face such resistance and keep persisting, but the Holy

Spirit gives us a power that is supernatural: the power to be faithful in our witness, no matter who is against us.

We see this play out in history in the Acts of the Apostles. After recounting the story of Pentecost, Luke spends the rest of Acts relaying how the Holy Spirit empowered Peter, Paul, and all Christ's followers to overcome many hardships to preach the Gospel. "We are to look to the example of the righteous who have gone before us and are to be joined to the love of God by death and sufferings" (St. Cyprian, *Letter 55, 2*). We have the same calling as the Apostles. Our lives might not be as outwardly heroic or exciting as theirs, but we are to follow the same path: pray for the Holy Spirit, receive Him, then under His power go out to the world to convert it.



Prayer and charity

Novena to the Holy Spirit

We are invited to join the Apostles in a Novena of prayer during the nine days between Ascension and Pentecost.

During these nine days ask God for the power of the Holy Spirit to give us the strength to succeed in whatever our personal need is, to give us the strength to carry all the crosses, little and big in the certain knowledge that we are not alone, but that God is with us supporting and carrying us along the way.



Throughout May Pope Francis has asked us to pray the Rosary and he gave us two additional prayers to say at the conclusion of the prayer. These are available on our website. As we conclude next Sunday, Monsignor John Armitage, the Rector at the national Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham, has invited each Diocese to take part in a Rosary Relay on 31 May. Each Diocese has been asked to encourage their people to pray the Rosary either individually, or where possible in groups, during a designated hour. The Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle been asked to pray the Rosary at 4.00pm on Pentecost Sunday. We are all asked to join in and pray the Rosary at that time and Bishop Robert will lead this at St Mary's Cathedral at 4pm and it will be live streamed from the cathedral and their YouTube channel



The Mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary

Joyful

1. The Annunciation
2. The Visitation
3. The Nativity
4. The Presentation
5. The Finding of Our Lord in the Temple

Sorrowful

1. The Agony in the Garden
2. The Scourging at the Pillar
3. The Crowning with Thorns
4. The Carrying of the Cross
5. The Crucifixion

Glorious

1. The Resurrection
1. The Ascension
2. The Descent of the Holy Spirit
3. The Assumption
4. The Coronation

Luminous

1. The Baptism in the Jordan
2. The Wedding at Cana
3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom
4. The Transfiguration
5. The Institution of the Eucharist

Please remember in your prayers all the sick of the parish and all those suffering from COVID19, their families and friends.

If you have any prayer intentions please email them to shaunadevitt@tiscali.co.uk for inclusion in the newsletter

Please also remember the dead

Eternal Rest Grant unto Them Oh Lord

WEEKLY COLLECTION

Thank You to All who have continued to make a weekly contribution in some way or another, it is gratefully received and necessary for the continued upkeep of our two churches.

To donate via bank transfer:

Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

Gateshead St Wilfrid's

Sort Code 40-34-18

Account Number 01164120

Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

Gateshead St Joseph's

Sort Code 40-34-18

Account Number 31164066

Please use reference: - Weekly Income

OR

Donate using a cheque made out to either parish

St Wilfrid's

Ford House

Sunderland Road

Gateshead NE8 3QR

St Joseph's

Presbytery

High West Street

Gateshead NE8 1LX

PLEASE REMEMBER YOU CAN FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK

Keeping us updated with your contact information

During this time of social distancing and self-isolation, Canon Michael Brown has tried to keep in touch with as many parishioners as he can to offer support and comfort. He has been able to do this only with those parishioners for whom he holds up to date contact details, it is at times like this that we realise how important it is to hold an up to date data base of contact details.

Please get in touch to ensure your contact details are correct, you may have moved to a new house, changed telephone number, got an email address since the last database was compiled, please let us know. Use parish email addresses or telephone to update your information.

If you know of anyone from either Parish who cannot access this newsletter via the website and would like to receive it by email, please ask them to give their

email address to Canon Michael Brown email michaelbrown6@btconnect.com or
Shauna Devitt at shaunadevitt@tiscali.co.uk

Preparing for a new normality

We are all anxious for life to return to normal, for us to be able to see one another again and to attend school and church regularly, however there is still much to be done before we can begin taking tiny baby steps towards this reality.

Our Headteachers and school staff and governors are meeting to discuss the challenges and realities of opening schools, at the moment they are struggling to keep on top of all the paperwork which the government and Local Education Authorities are publishing on how to keep our children safe whilst re-introducing them to school life.

Many schools have remained open throughout lockdown and we thank all our school staff for all they do and pray for them all at this time.

Our canons and Episcopal Council will be meeting with the Bishop to discuss the practicalities, challenges, and wisdom of opening our churches whilst maintaining the safety of all. In the next few weeks there will be more information about how and when the first steps can be taken to allow some access to church for private prayer. Your patience, support and understanding are very much appreciated, and we ask that you continue to pray for the best decisions to be made.

Diocesan News

Live Streaming of Masses

The following parishes have set up a live stream of Mass. Please visit the links for more details:

St. Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle

[Cathedral's YouTube Channel](#). Each day at 12.00 noon (Sunday at 11.30am) Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and devotions live streamed at 5.00pm each day.

Our Lady of Mercy Parish, Sunderland

[YouTube channel](#). You can also find details and information on their [Facebook page](#).

Billingham, St. Thomas of Canterbury

[Facebook page](#), Mass daily at 12.00 noon, Exposition at 1.00pm and Benediction at 2.00pm.

Chester le Street, St. Cuthbert and Sacriston, St. Bede

A recording of daily Mass via their [Facebook Page](#).

Darlington, St. Augustine's

Sunday Mass at 9.15am via their [Facebook page](#).

St. Mary's, Hexham

Via their [website](#) or [YouTube channel](#). Sunday Mass 10.00am, weekday Mass 6.00pm and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament Sunday 4.00pm.

St. Paul's, Cramlington

[Facebook Page.](#)

Stockton Family Parish

[Facebook Page.](#)

Parish of Our Lady Star of the Sea

[Facebook Page](#), Mass daily at 9.30am.

Mass for the Sick

The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales recognise that this time of the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting every person in our countries. Those who are sick, and their families, are suffering many hardships of isolation from contact with those they love. Our front-line workers in hospitals and in care homes all over our lands are giving exceptional service to those who are vulnerable currently. In order to show a spiritual solidarity with all those who are involved in the ways described above, each week a Bishop will celebrate Mass in their Cathedral which will be live streamed for people to join. This will take place every Thursday at 7pm. ♦ 28th May, Bishop Terence Drainey, Middlesbrough Cathedral These Masses will be live-streamed, and can be viewed by visiting the Cathedral webpage, or the Bishops' Conference Webpage (cbcew.org.uk)

Pope Video

The Pope Video is a monthly video with notes that highlights the Holy Father's monthly intentions for prayer. During this month of May the intention is for Deacons. Follow this link to watch and read. thepopevideo.org

Community Support

Gateshead Council have a dedicated page on their website offering a network of support for those who need help: -

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/15181/coronavirus-COVID-19-Community-support>

Or phone 01914333000

Alcoholics Anonymous Call free on 08009177650 or email help@aamail.org

As part of the pastoral care of parishioners and others during this time several qualified counsellors and listeners have generously made themselves available to anyone who may be troubled by the negative effect of the situation. These councillors and listeners can be contacted through St Mary's Cathedral Listening Service on 01912326953

European Union Citizens All EU, EEA and Swiss citizens living in the UK are required by the government to apply through its Settlement Scheme to continue living, working, and accessing services here. The deadline for applications is 30 June 2021. Details and links to the application process can be found at: gov.uk/eusettledstatus. Please bring this to the attention of friends, relatives and fellow parishioners who may need to apply. Assistance for those who may have difficulty applying is available at: gov.uk/help-eu-settlementscheme. The Catholic Church in England and Wales stands in solidarity with all European citizens who have made their homes here. They are a valued part of our parishes, schools, and communities.

