

Sunday 15 May 2022

The Fifth Sunday of Easter



Sermon and prayers of intercession © Paul Monk.

Liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

HYMN 1 Love divine, all loves excelling
Love divine all loves excelling

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

[\(different version of the hymn\)](#)

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

with all your soul, with all your mind,

and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us.

Let us therefore rejoice by putting away all malice and evil

and confess our sins in penitence and faith,

firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments

and to live in love and peace with all.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for the Fifth Sunday of Easter

Almighty God,
who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ
have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life:
grant that, as by your grace going before us
 you put into our minds good desires,
so by your continual help
we may bring them to good effect;
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

The apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticised him, saying, 'Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?' Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, 'I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' But I replied, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' But a second time the voice answered from heaven, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. The Spirit told me to go

with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.' And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?' When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, 'Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.' *Acts 11:1-18*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Revelation of St John the Divine

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.' And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.' *Revelation 21:1-6*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 A new commandment (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

Before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world,

he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' Jesus said to him, 'One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.' For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.' After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

'I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfil the scripture, "The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me." I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he. Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.' After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, 'Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.' The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.' So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, 'Do quickly what you are going to do.' Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, 'Buy what we need for the festival'; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

John 13:1-35

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

We have three readings about newness: in today's reading from Acts we learn of a rewriting of the Kosher Laws, which mean a new attitude to cleanliness; in the second reading, from Revelation, God creates a new heaven and a new earth; and in today's choice of Gospel, Jesus gives a New Commandment and—no accident—illustrates it in terms of cleansing.

Imagine you are a member of a persecuted minority. It seems likely that you'd tell stories at times of stress or dread to help keep alive your identity as a group. You do so because it's precious. With time, that story would crystallise into a narrative that functions as a constitution or founding document. It would contain rules.

The chosen people were such a minority so, true to form, they defined themselves as the people of the Law, which of course was given directly by God to Moses—think of Mount Sinai; think of stone tablets; think of the Ten Commandments. Much of the Law dealt with moral purity (do not steal, do not covet) and much dealt with ritual cleansing. That multi-faceted attention to being clean is typical of groups that want to define their membership, so they set up boundaries: 'We allow you in but only if you're clean in a way that *we* define.' It's no surprise therefore that the early Christians defined baptism in terms of ritualised cleansing.

That's the context. We now look at the stories in Acts and the Gospel. In Acts, God (speaking through St Peter) has rewritten the laws of cleanliness. We often call them the 'Kosher Laws'. A strict Jew had to obey these laws which defined what he or she ate, how the food was prepared, and so on. At a stroke, God repeals these laws. The inference is obvious; the laws go and therefore the boundaries go. '*All are welcome.*'

What Jesus in the Gospel does is complementary but far more profound. He washes the disciples' feet, which redefines the cleanliness laws, then explicitly redefines the Law. He says, 'Love one another ...' and adds the codicil, '... as I have

loved you.’ And then, if he’s not explicit enough, he tells them it’s not just about them and the ‘in crowd’. It’s about boundaries and letting people become members: he says, ‘By this will everyone know that you’re my disciples.’

We’re a church, a group. Under the law of the land, we’re a constituted charity. But in God’s eyes we’re a church, a group of believers, disciples, followers. Taken together, these readings are rewriting our foundation document. They’re citing the rules that define who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’. It’s not about what we eat (though interestingly Jesus, before today’s Gospel, does give us instructions about bread and wine). It’s not about saying a credal formula. It’s not about ceremonial cleaning. It’s not about who we know. Rather, it’s about love and proximity. Let me explain.

In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus is doing away with ‘the Law’ and replacing it with his new Law, a New Commandment, which he bases on love. In the Bible, love is never an emotion, even less is it a sentiment. It’s always a doing work. And just to make sure that point is hammered home, he gives them a worked example. He intends his example to shock us because he talks about washing feet.

In Jesus’ society, feet were taboo. For example, when the prophet Isaiah had a vision of seraphim, he noted how they hid their feet. Feet were taboo not only because they were dirty and stunk but because were considered as intimate. That taboo is why a Jew could not ask a servant to wash feet. It wasn’t just because feet smelt horrid, rather it was a matter of unveiling: no good, righteous person would take off his shoes except in front of close family. It’s like taking off all your clothes.

When Jesus washes feet, he’s doing the job of a faithful slave, a favourite carer. He’s demanding massive trust, offering a massive sacrifice, making himself vulnerable to massive humiliation, placing himself in the way of massive hurt. Love does that. In modern Britain we might not be washing feet, but we are to offer that same love.

It’s therefore time to reassess the way we look at the church as a group of Jesus’ followers. First that group, when true to its founder, does not impose boundaries that originate as codes and rules. The criterion is love—costly love, the sort that Jesus himself modelled. The nearest to a boundary, dictating whether you’re in or out, is Jesus’ demand that we love in this costly way. We’re not allowed to ask people to leave because of food, or cleanliness, or externals. This kind of love is impossible when underwritten by mere human strength, which is why we are to seek external power from God the Spirit, the Eucharist, from prayer, and so on.

But if we do create a new society in this form its sole boundary must be that those who join are people of love. We do so because God is, remember, love incarnate. We’re creating a second Eden, a new way of being. To use a phrase from today’s reading from Revelation, we are creating a New Heaven and a New Earth.

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

In response to the New Commandment, we commit to loving God. Empower us to love You so that we become entirely identified with You.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

In response to the New Commandment, we commit to living as a Church that works to build a new heaven here on earth. Empower us to living the love of Jesus so that Church becomes entirely identified with him.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

In response to the New Commandment, we commit to building a new earth. Empower us as we care for it and mend it. In love, help us to care for the people of the earth so that everything about our planet becomes entirely identified with You.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

In response to the New Commandment, we commit to love one another as Jesus loves us. Empower us to wash one another's feet and explore every means of love.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

In response to the New Commandment, we commit to loving the Lord. Empower us to move from living in this world and start living in the next. We pray for those whose earthly phase of being has ended and the new begun.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The peace

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then were they glad when they saw the Lord. Alleluia.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Come down O Love divine (please click on this link to hear the hymn)
Come down O Love divine (instrumental version)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

HYMN 4 Love one another (please click on this link to hear the hymn)
Love one another (Iona community version)

God the Father,
by whose love Christ was raised from the dead,
open to you who believe the gates of everlasting life.

And the blessing of God the Almighty:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, you made the world and love your creation.
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.
And so we gladly thank you,
with saints and angels praising you, and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Eternal God,
whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life:
grant us to walk in his way,
to rejoice in his truth,
and to share his risen life;
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.