

Thursday 22 June 2023

St Alban



St Albans Cathedral

This church was traditionally the site of Alban's martyrdom and a sumptuous tomb and reliquary existed here until the Reformation.

Alban was a soldier in the Roman city of Verulamium (now St Albans in Hertfordshire). He gave shelter to a Christian priest fleeing from persecution, hiding him in his own house for several days. Alban was greatly influenced by the priest's devotion; he received instruction and was converted.

When the priest's hiding-place was discovered, Alban dressed himself in the priest's cloak and was arrested in his place. The Roman authorities tortured Alban when he refused to renounce his faith. He was beheaded on this day, probably in the year 250, and so became the first British martyr.

Sermon © The Revd Denise Owen.

Liturgy and Prayers of intercession © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

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

The hymn can be accessed via a YouTube link. Please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,
<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 One Church, one faith, one Lord ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

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.

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.

The saints were faithful unto death
and now dwell in the heavenly kingdom for ever.
As we celebrate their joy,
let us bring to the Lord our sins and weaknesses,
and ask for his mercy.

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 St Alban

Eternal Father,
when the gospel of Christ first came to our land
you gloriously confirmed the faith of Alban
by making him the first to win a martyr's crown:
grant that, following his example,
in the fellowship of the saints
we may worship you, the living God,
and give true witness to Jesus Christ your Son our 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 book of Wisdom

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace.' *Wisdom 3:1-3*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Second Letter of St Paul to Timothy

Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer. And in the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules. It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel, for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

2 Timothy 2:3–13

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Take my life and let it be

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus said, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour. *John 12:24–26*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

I wonder how closely you look at and think about the Creed? There's an example of a Creed below, expressed in a series of questions, it sets out the very basic doctrine or beliefs of the Christian Church. There are other forms of Creed: the Nicene and Apostolic Creeds, for example, and these two Creeds include the statement [We or I believe] ... in the Communion of Saints. I find this statement quite fascinating (as I do other statements found in the Creeds to be fair!) as it could be understood in more than one way. What does 'communion of saints' mean to you? We may wrongly assume that the 'saints' are all those who have gone before us into the glorious, closer presence of God, as St Alban did all those many centuries ago. It's clear, however, in Paul's letters that for him the saints are those who are disciples of Christ here on earth. In which case the 'communion' of saints could be understood as the worldwide Church, the community of the baptised who live in fellowship with each other under God. The 'communion of saints' is thus all and every disciple of Christ living today, who are through the Holy Spirit connected with each other.

Another understanding of the 'communion of saints' is that the Church on earth is joined in a mystical but very real way to the saints (and angels) in heaven. How can this be? Well, this communion is created through worship and praise, so that, when the Church on earth worships, it is joining in with the praise and worship which is continually offered in heaven. Just think about that! What a wonderful and uplifting idea. That in each of our parish churches, wherever they are, however big or small the congregation, the worship and praise which takes place is adding to the songs of the saints and angels in heaven. Indeed, when we sing the 'Gloria' we are using some of the actual words of joy the angels sang when they announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds.

Today we give thanks for the life of St Alban, the first British martyr, a hero of the faith in this country who gave his life to save the life of a priest. An amazing act of bravery which has been replicated in the lives of many thousands of saints down the centuries, and is being replayed even today in the persecuted Church. Perhaps even more wonderful is, that when we sing a hymn of praise, our voices are adding to the voice of Alban and the whole host of heaven, whose joy it is to praise the Lord.

It is often said that Christians live in a time which is both now, the immediate moment, and what is to come, which is eternity, and the gift of eternal life. The 'communion of saints' illustrates this most clearly, because we belong to the Church which is here on earth, continuing to work for God's Kingdom, *and* we have a share in the Church which rejoices in the closer presence of God in heaven. We belong to

both of these visions of the Church because we are among the communion of the saints.

This is a wonderful and humbling thought, and one that we should give thanks for every day. It's a reminder that as we go about our daily lives here on earth, working, shopping, watching TV, etc., we are at the same time, caught up in the light and joy of heaven, and we can occasionally even get glimpses of that transformed life.

So, we celebrate the martyr St Alban today, and give thanks that we share with him in the worship and praise of our Lord. Amen

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

We pray for strength to follow Jesus.

Saviour, we hear your call.

All Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

All Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Unless you change
and become humble like little children,
you can never enter the kingdom of heaven.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

All Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Happy are the humble;
they will receive what God has promised.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

All Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Be merciful as your Father is merciful;
love your enemies and do good to them.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

All Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Love one another, as I love you;
there is no greater love than this,
to lay down your life for your friends.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

All Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Go to people everywhere
and make them my disciples,
and I will be with you always, to the end of time.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

All Help us to follow.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

Once we were far off,
but now in union with Christ Jesus we have been brought near through the
shedding of Christ's blood,
for he is our peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 [O Thou who at thy Eucharist didst pray](#) [\(click to hear the hymn\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

God give you grace to follow his saints
in faith and love and steadfastness
and the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All **Amen.**

HYMN 4 [Seek ye first](#) [\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

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.

It is indeed right and good,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
For following the example of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ,
your holy martyr Alban shed his blood for the glory of your name.
His death reveals your power made perfect in our human frailty.
You choose the weak and make them strong
in bearing witness to you
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
With joyful hearts we echo on earth
the song of the angels in heaven
as they praise your glory without end:

**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 Alban and 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

God our Redeemer,
whose Church was strengthened
by the blood of your martyr Alban:
so bind us, in life and death, to Christ's sacrifice
that our lives, broken and offered with his,
may carry his death and proclaim his resurrection in the world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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.