



Patronal Festival Sunday 6th September

Father God, help us to come to you this morning with open and thankful hearts. Fill us with the joy and peace that comes with knowing you. Be with us as we walk in your light, rejoice in your love and reflect your glory.

Amen

Hymn 631: Tell out my soul

Welcome

The Lord be with you,
and also with you

Prayer of Preparation

**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**

Prayer of Confession

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." 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.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with 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**

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

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. **Amen**

Gloria

**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.**

Collect for today

Almighty God, who looked upon the lowliness of the Blessed Virgin Mary and chose her to be the mother of your only Son: grant that we who are redeemed by his blood may share with her in the glory of your eternal kingdom; through 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. **Amen**

Old Testament Reading: Micah 5:2-4

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore, he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labour has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

Hymn 371: Jubilate x 2

Gospel Reading: Matthew 1: 18 - 23

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon: The Venerable Alex Hughes

If you can see my rather overgrown beard and the shapeless mop on top of my head, you can tell that I don't go to the barber's very often. When I do, it's not an experience I enjoy very much. I don't mind having my hair cut – in fact, I find it's a rather pleasurable sensation. What I don't like is all that time staring at my reflection. In the everyday run of my life I don't look in the mirror much; but when I'm stuck face-to-face with myself for half an hour or so at the barber's, I can't avoid the mug staring back at me. So I notice that one of my eyes is slightly bigger than the other, and that my nose is a bit lopsided; I've got more crow's feet around my eyes, and bags underneath them, and more grey around my temples than when I last had a good look; I've got little wisps of hair starting to grow in my ears, and it seems that my eyebrows have developed a life of their own. It's quite a depressing experience really – though I'm sure it's a much worse for me than it would be for any of you lovely people out there...

The reason I tell you this is because I think most people have a fairly love-hate relationship with their bodies – and these days I suspect it's more of a hate relationship; either because our bodies so obviously fail to live up to the impossible images of air-brushed beauty that bombard us everywhere in the media, or because we are acutely aware of how our bodies get sick and damaged, grow old and wear out. And there is, sadly and wrongly, a thread running through Christianity that sees the body as something bad, the source of our sinfulness. But none of this is right, because we know that God made our bodies and loves our bodies; and I believe that our bodies play an important part in our relationship with God. This is where Mary, your patron, comes in.

You may remember that Mary sang a famous song, sometimes known as the Magnificat, which begins, "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my saviour". When we hear her singing about her *soul* and her *spirit*, we might be tempted to fall back into the idea that Christianity is something airy-fairy and not much connected with our bodies. But let's not forget

that when Mary sang those words she was pregnant: her greatest act of love and obedience to God was the offering of her body. You can't grow a baby in your soul and you can't give birth to one with your spirit – as any woman who has been through pregnancy and childbirth will tell you! Being the mother of Jesus was a physical thing; and so, I believe, is Christianity.

To be godly is not to learn some strange set of mystical arts, but to find and cooperate with the presence of God in all the ordinary things of life, much of which is about how we care for our own and other people's physical wellbeing. Don't worry, then, if you're the kind of Christian who finds it hard to put your faith into words: just get on and live it! That's how it was for Mary. When the angel tried to explain what was going to happen to her she answered, "How can this be?" She didn't understand. But she knew what to do: "Let it be to me according to your word," she said. I'm sure this is what St Paul meant when he called upon the Christians in Rome to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice...which is your spiritual worship."

So a church that has Mary as its patron will know that Christianity is not something terribly mysterious and difficult to get to grips with. It's often a very practical religion, which focuses on ordinary, everyday things. It's a religion for ordinary people, like you and me: the kind of people who sometimes look in the mirror and wince; who know their weakness and their pain; but who understand that God's love embraces all of this, and invites us to make the best of what we have and to live well with our neighbours on the earth. That's a large part of what being the Body of Christ, the church, is all about.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers

The Peace

Take a moment and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for each other and our church family church community. Maybe call or text someone who would enjoy sharing the peace with you.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy, that you may be kept safe and blameless in spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Hymn 195: From heaven you came (The servant King)

The Lord's Prayer

**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.**

Hymn 350: Jesus good above all other

Remembering the Lord's Supper

Take a moment to remember the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. As we think about this meal - with the washing of feet and bread and wine shared with friends - we remember Jesus' offering of himself on the cross. We rejoice in his resurrection from the dead and look forward to the coming of God's Kingdom. While we cannot receive Christ in the sacraments in the usual way, we can be the presence of Christ in our homes and communities and we can be a praying presence wherever we are.

Hymn 474: Now thank we all our God

Closing Prayer

Lord God, we thank you for this time of worship; may your love and peace remain with us in the coming days. Be with us in all that we will think, say and do so that our lives may reflect your glory. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen