

**ST. ANDREW'S
ST. ANNE'S
ST. NINIAN'S**



**28th April 2024
6:00pm**

ENTRANCE

The service begins with a **sentence from the Bible** (Romans 16, 26), a **call to stand** (please do so if you are able to). For the rest of the service the words in bold are read or sung by everyone. We sit to pray and stand to sing.

HYMNS OF CRUCIFIXION

HYMN 374 From heaven you came (chosen by St. Andrew's)

WELCOME and SHARING OF THE PEACE

We welcome one another with Christ's words, 'Peace be with you'.

CALL TO WORSHIP (Psalm 95: 1 – 6)

Leader: Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

All: Let us come before him with thanksgiving, and extol him with music and song.

Leader: For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods.

All: In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him.

Leader: The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

All: Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;

HYMN 380 There is a green hill far away (chosen by St. Andrew's)

OPENING PRAYER OF ADORATION & LORD'S PRAYER

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen

HYMN 403 Were you there when they crucified my Lord
(chosen by St. Andrew's)

READING: *Good Friday*, Archbishop Justin Welby

When I was at primary school, in our RE lessons we learned about the crucifixion and resurrection. This being a very long time ago, at the beginning of the 1960s, there were tests on such things as remembering all of Jesus' words during his walk to execution and during his crucifixion. I never could remember them all. However, I do remember the teacher saying how remarkable Jesus was because he cared for others even while he was being crucified. Being 8 and not very nice – some people might say only one aspect of that has changed – I was unimpressed. Surely this was a story, and he got his lines right.

Age may not teach us much, but for many it teaches the nature of risk. We learn that we are not immortal; that things can go wrong. With age, we learn to be more cautious, much more aware of disappointment and pain and therefore more able to identify with the depths of a story: the complex realities of human suffering.

So, it is with the crucifixion. Jesus was in physical agony to an indescribable extreme. He was also in spiritual and emotional agony. He had seen his community of disciples torn apart by outright betrayal as well as cowardice and desertion. He could see his mother watching him die; is it possible to imagine her anguish? He was mocked and told he was a failure. His sense of God the Father's presence was gone. There was no earthly or heavenly help in his hour of need. Like every human being he had to rely, in his agony, on what he could find within himself. Jesus could not call on God for help because he was choosing to enter into the fullest hell of all: separation from his loving heavenly Father, and therefore bearing the weight of the wrongs of our world. Jesus would bear our sins, taking the whole darkness of human history and cosmic chaos, and die under their weight. The resurrection was promised, but in the absence of God the Father it could only be taken in faith. These were not lines to be spoken in some school play: this was God's love in action, even to the point where the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit - that deep mystery - was separated, out of love for God's creatures.

As we wait at the cross, and bring the darkness of bereavement, of isolation, of confinement, of insecurity and homelessness, or the sufferings of others, we place them all at the feet of Jesus. We can do nothing else. But at feet of Jesus, at the cross, we also find the sign of our hope and the faithfulness of God-in-Christ, crucified. This is Jesus Christ who bears our sins and our suffering, that we may hear the whispers of resurrection: of new life, forgiveness, freedom and healing. We too may call out: "Oh God, where are you?" The answer will come, "With you in your suffering and fear, knowing every aspect of it, for I drank it to the dregs. With you, if you take my hand, to lead you to new light and life."

HYMN 365 Ride on! ride on in majesty! (chosen by St. Anne's)

HYMNS OF RESURRECTION

SCRIPTURE: John 11: 25 – 26

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. Do you believe this?'

HYMN 425 The Saviour died (chosen by St. Anne's)

READING: *Easter*, Rt. Rev. Sally Foster-Fulton

The ancient Easter story, for so many of us difficult to decipher, if we consider it at all. There are still hints of a deeper meaning hidden in hunts for painted eggs, then the race to roll them downhill, and the now less fashionable 'new clothes for Easter Sunday'. We still nod to its message when we give chocolate eggs. Laden with language so distanced from us, words we struggle to translate into something that speaks to us today – crucifixion, resurrection, the symbolism of an empty tomb and the resurgence of a group who had scattered fear-filled and desolate.

They claimed that the one they followed was still amongst them, still transforming the world through them. The story still whispers wisdom to a weary world. The story still heralds an audacious hope we need to hear, still has the power to hold us fast and firm to each other. The story, when heard and heeded, still sends us home to live a different, difficult, divinely inspired way. Easter - the truth that love is so persistent that it penetrates and overpowers death itself – that it will not be doused like a candle in the wind, but rises up in the lives of those who were loved, taught, healed, fed, forgiven and freed. They will believe it enough to put their weight behind it, enough to stand up for it, speak out for it, act in ways that bring its truth to life again and again.

One life, your life matters. One life, your life makes its mark on those you share yourself with. One life, your life makes an impact much more far-reaching than your limited sight and time allows you to witness. One life, your life will bear witness to those who follow.

Maybe the question the story asks is 'who will resurrect in you?' When your one life resonates with the world, what will your life bring back to life in others? Will it be love, peace, justice for the most vulnerable? Will it spark life in the world we share long after your beautiful, brief flicker of time has ended? The ancient Easter story, echoing through the eons whispers to a weary world – 'love wins.' And it begins, but certainly does not end, with you.

HYMN 417 Now the green blade riseth (chosen by St. Ninian's)

HYMNS OF ASCENSION

SCRIPTURE: Mark 16: 15, 19 – 20

And Jesus said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.' So, then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.

HYMN 436 Christ triumphant, ever reigning (chosen by St. Anne's)

READING: *The Ascension*, Pope Francis

The Gospel passage – the conclusion of the Gospel of Mark – presents us with the Risen One's final encounter with the disciples before he ascends to the right hand of the Father. Usually, as we know, farewell scenes are sad. They cause a feeling of loss, of abandonment in those who remain; instead, none of this happens to the disciples. Despite their separation from the Lord, they do not appear grief-stricken, but rather, they are joyful and ready to go out into the world as missionaries. Why are the disciples not sad? Why should we too rejoice at seeing Jesus ascending into heaven? Because the Ascension completes Jesus' mission among us. Indeed, if it is for us that Jesus descended from heaven, it is also for us that he ascends there. After having descended into our humanity and redeeming it – God, the Son of God, descends and becomes man, takes our humanity, and redeems it – he now ascends into heaven, taking our flesh with him. He is the first man who enters heaven, because Jesus is man, true man; he is God, true God; our flesh is in heaven, and this gives us joy. Now at the right hand of the Father sits a human body, for the first time, the body of Jesus, and in this mystery each of us contemplates our own future destination.

This is not at all an abandonment; Jesus remains forever with the disciples – with us. He remains in prayer, because he, as man, prays to the Father, and as God, man, and God, shows Him his wounds, the wounds by which he has redeemed us. Jesus' prayer is there, with our flesh: he is one of us, God man, and he prays for us. And this has to give us confidence, or rather joy, great joy! And the second reason for joy is Jesus' promise. He told us: "I will send you the Holy Spirit". And there, with the Holy Spirit, that commandment is made which he gives in his farewell: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel". And it will be the power of the Holy Spirit that leads us there into the world, to bring the Gospel. He left with his wounds, which were the price of our salvation, and he prays for us. And then he sends us the Holy Spirit; he promises us the Holy Spirit, to go to evangelize. This is the reason for joy on the day of the Ascension.

HYMN 463 Fairest Lord Jesus (chosen by St. Anne's)

CLOSING PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & INTERCESSION

HYMN 449 Rejoice the Lord is King (chosen by St. Ninian's)

CLOSING RESPONSES

Leader: People of God, go into the world: dance, laugh, sing, and create.

All: We go with the assurance of God's blessing.

Leader: People of God, go into the world: risk, explore, discover, and love.

All: We go with the assurance of Christ's love.

Leader: People of God, go into the world: believe, hope, struggle, and remember.

**All: We go with the assurance of the Spirit's grace.
Thanks be to God.**

HYMN 419 Thine be the glory (chosen by St. Ninian's)

BENEDICTION