

Sunday 14 June 2020 First Sunday after Trinity

COLLECT O God, the strength of all those who put their trust in you, mercifully accept our prayers and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without you, grant us the help of your grace, that in the keeping of your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; 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.

FIRST READING Exodus 19:2-8a. The Israelites had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God; the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites." So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. The people all answered as one: "Everything that the LORD has spoken we will do."

PSALM 100 *R* We are the people and the sheep of his pasture. Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands; serve the Lord with gladness and come before his presence with a song. Know this: The Lord himself is God; he himself has made us and we are his; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. *R* Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise; give thanks to him and call upon his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his faithfulness endures from age to age. *R*

SECOND READING Romans 5:1-8. Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

GOSPEL (Short or long reading) Matthew 9:35 – 10:8, (9-23) Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest." Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. *[Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for labourers deserve their food. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgement than for that town. See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be*

wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”]

POST COMMUNION Eternal Father, we thank you for nourishing us with these heavenly gifts: may our communion strengthen us in faith, build us up in hope, and make us grow in love; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sunday Homily 14 JUNE 2020 FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

“Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.” Matthew 10:8

Healing today is big business. Hospitals get bigger and better, equipped with the latest technology science can invent and money can buy. New treatments, new drugs, new approaches are being pioneered all the time. Such breakthroughs take time and energy. The buildings, the medicines, the research are all expensive. State-run medical services find it ever more difficult to fund the treatments which are needed and waiting lists grow longer. The private sector is being called upon to fill gaps. Morale is rarely high. Practitioners burn out or turn to other professions, frustrated by the limitations placed upon them. Many choose to work elsewhere, sometimes in more lucrative areas of the world. But others choose poorer countries where, with many fewer resources, there can still be some sense of a job worth doing. Their patients can be met as fully human beings, combining physical and inner healing to ensure maintenance of their dignity in trying circumstances. Patients in the Western world often feel reduced to ciphers, as “cases” defined by their medical problem rather than as a person, an individual. They are reduced to feeling just the sum of their individual parts, like a car in for servicing, their emotional and spiritual needs being left to be dealt with by friends and family. Despite some forays into alternative medicine, the Western world’s dominant model of healing continues to treat us like biological machines.

Jesus draws an essential connection between his preaching of the kingdom and the healing of the whole person. The context for his sending out of the disciples is his distress at the state of the crowds who have come to him with their many needs. They are described, in Matthew 9:36, as “harassed and helpless”, a fair description of the occupants of a modern hospital’s busy ward. Jesus complains to his disciples that there are not enough labourers to work at healing their ills. In response he calls them together and gives them a special commission. To begin with, he does not send them to the world at large, but to their own compatriots, the people of Israel. Those to whom the promises of the Old Testament were made, promises which included that of the Father who would bear them up on eagles’ wings, watch over them, guard them forever, make of them a consecrated nation. For us today such language may seem rather detached, even ethereal, when we are faced with the problems of daily life. But what Jesus is asking of his disciples is more down to earth. In order to preach the kingdom they must first of all offer healing, whether of evil spirits or of the physical ailments which affect those they meet. To preach the kingdom is to offer healing of the whole person. The power to do this can only come from Christ himself, who is the fulfilment of all the Old Testament promises.

The Church has always been involved with physical as well as spiritual healing. Medieval monasteries began the care which was later taken up by the great nursing orders, the forerunners of today’s medical services. Since the State and private business have taken over the provision of physical care, the Church’s role has become more directed towards the “inner” person, through chaplaincy provision and visiting. Disappointment with the depersonalisation in many areas of medicine today and the apparent split between physical and spiritual care has led to a higher profile for alternative

methods of healing. Homeopathy, acupuncture, shiatsu, reflexology and others combine the two aspects of healing. The search for elements not provided by common medical practice may stem from people feeling that their whole person is not being addressed, even though we know that mind, body and spirit interact all the time. We could say that the kingdom is not being preached as Jesus intended. Society is failing to bring people the fullest healing available to them. How do we remedy this? First by lobbying those who have the power to reassess and change the systems within our society. But also by ensuring that we treat our sisters and brothers as whole people, precious in their totality, not just the bits of them that we can cope with. Our work is to bring Christ's wholeness to all people, regardless of difference, becoming his true disciples, bringing the kingdom to all those that we meet, especially the "harassed and helpless".