

Sunday 28 June 2020 Third Sunday after Trinity

COLLECT Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts whereby we call you Father: give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service, that we and all creation may be brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God; 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 Jeremiah 28:5-9. The prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD; and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD fulfil the words that you have prophesied, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the LORD, and all the exiles. But listen now to this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet."

PSALM 89:1-4. 15-18 **R** Your love, O Lord, for ever will I sing. Your love, O Lord, for ever will I sing; from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness. For I am persuaded that your love is established for ever; you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens. **R** "I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn an oath to David my servant: 'I will establish your line for ever, and preserve your throne for all generations.'" **R** Happy are the people who know the festal shout! they walk, O Lord, in the light of your presence. They rejoice daily in your name; they are jubilant in your righteousness. **R** For you are the glory of their strength, and by your favour our might is exalted. Truly, the Lord is our ruler; the Holy One of Israel is our king. **R**

SECOND READING Romans 6:12-23. Do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

GOSPEL Matthew 10:40-42. Jesus said to the twelve: "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."

POST COMMUNION O God, whose beauty is beyond our imagining and whose power we cannot comprehend: show us your glory as far as we can grasp it, and shield us from knowing more than we can bear until we may look upon you without fear; through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Sunday Homily 28 JUNE 2020 THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.” Matthew 10:40

Picture the scene. It's the final of the 4 x 400 metres relay in the Olympic Games. We're cheering our team as each of them runs their lap, pushing themselves to the very limit. The baton is handed on smoothly each time, and the exhausted runners stumble from the track to watch their team-mates complete their laps. At the finishing line they're cheering on the last runner as loudly as we are in the stands... and we've done it! All that hard work has been worth it. Our team has won. An outstanding team effort, against all the odds. And now it's time for the medal ceremony, and all four of them are on the podium. Our flag is raised, our anthem is played and our whole country celebrates.

There's something of a relay race in today's Gospel. Jesus is handing the baton on. He's sending out his closest disciples to continue his own mission of both proclaiming and putting into practice the good news of the kingdom of God. In this chapter Matthew has named the twelve apostles and then recorded the instructions that Jesus gave them for their mission. They were to heal the sick, drive out evil spirits, bear witness to Jesus and announce that the kingdom was near. It would be a difficult task, and they would need to risk hardship, rifts with their loved ones and even their very lives. Why, then, should they bother? In this final passage of the chapter, short as it is, Jesus sums up the whole purpose of their mission. The people who listen to them, the ones who welcome the good news they bring, will receive a reward: a prophet's reward, or the reward of the righteous. A prophet's reward is to see his prophecy come true, while the reward of the righteous, as Jesus made clear in the Beatitudes during the Sermon on the Mount, is nothing less than a place in the kingdom of heaven. This, then, is the ultimate purpose of the mission: that those who are listening will know that the disciples' words come from God and that they too will be welcomed into the kingdom of heaven, where the whole company of saints will celebrate the victory that Jesus has already won for us. There is a sequence here, almost like the handing on of a baton in a relay race. God reveals his word of love in Jesus, who passes the word to the disciples, and the disciples hand it on to those who listen to them and welcome them into their lives. There are some important differences, of course, between the model of the relay race and the reality of mission and evangelism. When we hand on the baton of God's love, we don't lose touch with it ourselves! Love, especially the love of God, is something which can be kept and passed on. And as any Christian minister will tell you, those who listen will often hand it back, polished and shining, as a gift to enrich the minister's own life. The relay race of revelation is one which goes on and on, round and round the track of this life. God's love flows through Jesus, through the action of the Holy Spirit, through the Church, through us as individual Christians, into the lives of those who hear about it for the first time... and back to God in our worship. We are caught up into the dynamic which is at the heart of God the Trinity: love in action.

We are the disciples; we are the runners. The baton passed to us is so good that we want everyone to have a chance to hold it! Like dedicated athletes, we are not coerced into this race, but enter it. And the reward for this race, not earned but freely given by God, is eternal life. Like the original disciples, we are called to spread the good news of the kingdom of God, the good news of God's love. What a privilege, what a responsibility! But talking about it isn't enough – it needs to be put into practice, like the disciples healing the sick. In this Eucharist we remember that Jesus didn't just preach about the kingdom of heaven: he opened the door to it. Here, in Jesus, is the word of God, love in action. Pass it on!