

## Seventh Sunday of Easter

## Hymn Alleluia Sing to Jesus

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus;  
His the scepter, His the throne.  
Alleluia! His the triumph,  
His the victory alone.  
Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion  
thunder like a mighty flood;  
"Jesus out of ev'ry nation  
has redeemed us by His blood.

Alleluia! Not as orphans  
are we left in sorrow now.  
Alleluia! He is near us;  
faith believes, nor questions how.  
Though the cloud from sight received Him  
when the forty days were o'er,  
shall our hearts forget His promise,  
"I am with you evermore"?

Alleluia! Bread of heaven,  
here on earth our food, our stay.  
Alleluia! Here the sinful  
flee to You from day to day.  
Intercessor, Friend of sinners,  
earth's Redeemer, hear our plea  
where the songs of all the sinless  
sweep across the crystal sea.

Alleluia, King eternal,  
Thee the Lord of lords we own;  
Alleluia, born of Mary,  
Earth thy footstool, heaven thy throne:  
Thou within the veil has entered,  
Robed in flesh, our great High Priest;  
Thou on earth both Priest and Victim  
In the eucharistic feast.

*W. Chatterton Dix (1837-98)*

## Introduction

Everything seems out of balance. Fundamental to Church and community life are what the church calls Occasional Offices – Baptisms, weddings and funerals. Funerals are happening as you know but not in church. And there are no baptisms or weddings for the moment and so family life across the world has been disrupted because these key moments cannot be marked.

The names of all the couples who are planning services either of marriage or blessing are written in the final prayers of this service. Please keep them in your mind as they work out the implications of Coronavirus for them.



## Hymn Writer: W. C. Dix

Most British hymn writers in the nineteenth century were clergymen, but William Chatterton Dix (b. Bristol, England, 1837; d. Cheddar, Somerset, England, 1898) was a notable exception.

Trained in the business world, he became the manager of a marine insurance company in Glasgow. Dix published various volumes of his hymns, such as *Hymns of Love and Joy* (1861) and *Altar Songs: Verses on the Holy Eucharist* (1867). A number of his texts were first published in *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1861).

Few of his hymns however have made their way into more modern hymn books with the exception of the Epiphany hymn: "As with gladness men of old."

**Hyfrydol** (Welsh meaning "cheerful"), Welsh hymn tune that appears in a number of hymnals in various arrangements. Composed by Rowland Prichard it was originally published in the composer's handbook to the children's songbook *Cyfaill y Cantorion* ("The Singers' Friend") in 1844. Prichard composed the tune before he was twenty years old

There is a wonderful line in today's gospel reading from the prayer of Jesus: 'Holy Father, protect your children, so that they may be one, as we are one.'

We are all children of God whether we are new-born or a hundred years old. We might like to think we are terribly grown up - but we are still children of God. And the prayer of Jesus was that we would be one as part of God's family. Baptisms, weddings and funerals are a key part of church life so the prayer for today is that as we begin to think about unlocking our churches we may regain something of the unity, the oneness for which God longs.

## Reading

## Acts 1:6-14

<sup>6</sup>So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup>He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." <sup>9</sup>When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup>While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. <sup>11</sup>They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." <sup>12</sup>Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. <sup>13</sup>When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of <sup>[a]</sup>James. <sup>14</sup>All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

## Psalm 68:1-10, 33-36

Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered;  
let those that hate him flee before him.

**As the smoke vanishes, so may they vanish away;  
as wax melts at the fire,  
so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.**

But let the righteous be glad and rejoice before God;  
let them make merry with gladness.

**Sing to God, sing praises to his name;  
exalt him who rides on the clouds.**

**The Lord is his name; rejoice before him.**

Father of the fatherless, defender of widows,  
God in his holy habitation!

**God gives the solitary a home  
and brings forth prisoners to songs of welcome,  
but the rebellious inhabit a burning desert.**

O God, when you went forth before your people,  
when you marched through the wilderness,

**The earth shook and the heavens dropped down rain,  
at the presence of God, the Lord of Sinai,  
at the presence of God, the God of Israel.**

You sent down a gracious rain, O God;  
you refreshed your inheritance when it was weary.

**Your people came to dwell there;  
in your goodness, O God, you provide for the poor.**

He rides on the ancient heaven of heavens  
and sends forth his voice, a mighty voice.

**Ascribe power to God, whose splendour is over Israel,**

**whose power is above the clouds.**

How terrible is God in his holy sanctuary,  
the God of Israel, who gives power and strength to his people!  
Blessed be God.

## **Reading**

Some verses from John 17

Jesus said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you.

This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in you before the world existed.

I have made you known to the world. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now Father, I am coming to you.

Holy Father, protect your children, so that they may be one, as we are one."

## **Reflection**

At the start of this crisis many national borders were closed, different communities sealed off and individuals isolated. In some case even married couples have had to isolate from each other.

My mind this week has been very much with the couples who had planned their weddings for this summer. Many have now postponed their services until later in the year or in some case to a whole year away and that for them and their families has been hugely unsettling. Weddings of course, are all about oneness; about two people becoming one; about families being united in a new way and all of that is very much focused in the different parts of the marriage service.

Today's Gospel speaks of oneness and a unity for all. Jesus's prayer: 'Holy Father, protect your children, so that they may be one, as we are one.' And just as couples come the altar to be made one before God so in time will families, communities and nations need to find that unity which has been broken.

In a world that is divided, not least between rich and poor, but also within families, communities and nations, we will need places of worship more than ever. Churches that are open not necessarily just for services but as places simply to visit and to seek the unity for which Christ prayed and we all long.

The reading from the Acts of the Apostles describes the Ascension or, as I heard it described this week, the moment from when Jesus began to work from home! The Ascension is a real moment of unity between the Father and the Son but that is all within the context of the imminence at Pentecost or Whitsun when the Holy Spirit confirms that unity between God and all God's people.

In the disunity of the world with all its divisions we can still be one with God but it requires effort on our part; the effort of listening to God and the effort of playing our part in following the way of Christ.

## Prayers

The prayer of Jesus was that the world might be one as he and God the Father are one.

In this broken and divided world, we give thanks for all who work to bring harmony, peace, healing and wholeness.

As some children return to school, we pray for them and their families; their teachers and all in education that with unity of purpose they, and we, will learn new ways to live.

As the lockdown is loosened we pray for all who venture back to work and for those who provide means of transport. Help us to find new ways of rebuilding our economy and the economies of the world.

As many people continue to suffer in hospitals, care homes, and in their own homes, we pray for their healing and for the dedicated people who help them. Help us care for the mental health of all people and to understand the wounds that many are carrying. Help us as a society to value more those who care and help us to learn from this experience and to become a more compassionate world.

As many couples have postponed or changed their plans to be married, be them as the future unfolds. Be with:

Mary & David  
Tom & Alex  
Claudia & Richard  
Viv & Annabelle  
John & Nidhy  
Becky & Tim  
George & Rachel  
Viv & Chris  
Peter & Aisling  
Faith & Daniel  
Aaron & Lucy  
Jacq & John  
Caine & Natalie  
Emma & Jonathan  
Simon & Naomi  
Lily & Will  
Ben & Issy

Give them the gifts of faith, hope and love to look forward with confidence.

We pray for the peace of those who have died and the comfort of all who mourn.

These prayers we ask in the name of Jesus Christ who makes us one with each other and with him.

And as Jesus taught us:

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Blessing

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Spirit; and the blessing of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit be upon us all. **Amen.**