

**AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021**  
**2nd Sunday before Lent**

*To prepare ourselves for our worship, we reflect on the day and on our relationships.*

- *What good things have come from God today?*
- *Where have I fallen short?*
- *What will I try to do differently in future?*

**In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen**

Let us now ask for forgiveness of our sins, and the grace to be reconciled with one another.

Lord Jesus, you reconcile us to one another and to the Father.

Lord have mercy

**Lord have mercy**

You heal the wounds of sin and division.

Christ have mercy

**Christ have mercy**

You seek out and save the lost.

Lord have mercy

**Lord have mercy**

May the God of love and power  
forgive us and free us from our sins,  
heal and strengthen us by God's Spirit,  
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*The Collect (special prayer for today)*

Almighty God, you have created the heavens and the earth and made us in your own image: teach us to discern your hand in all your works and your likeness in all your children; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things now and for ever.

**Amen**

## READINGS

### *Colossians 1:15-20*

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

## GOSPEL READING

### *John 1:1-14*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

## REFLECTION

The words that open St John's Gospel - 'In the beginning' - are the same as those that open the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Genesis describes the origins of the human race, and as is widely seen in the Hebrew scriptures, the name Adam has a meaning – mankind or perhaps we would now talk of humanity. So rather than understanding Genesis as history, it is more a picture of what humans should be, and how we fell short of that ideal.

And in what is often referred to as the 'Prologue' to his Gospel, St John is giving us the heads up on what he is intending to do. He is going to describe nothing less than a *new* creation. The new humanity will progress towards what God meant us to be.

Jesus was the Word (of God) made flesh, and the Gospel tells us his life story. And in many ways this is also our life story. This is not mere history. Jesus *is* the new humanity; he *is* our role model; he *is* what we are meant to be becoming.

As we live through the strictures forced upon us by Covid-19, a phrase that is commonly heard is 'a new normal'. There are those who would just return to the 'old normal' because therein is to be found the comfort of familiarity, the opportunity to concentrate on our own needs, and the temptation to turn a blind eye to what is going on around us. Yet throughout the last twelve months eyes have been opened, awareness has been raised, and so many people have reached out to help friends and strangers alike. It seems at times that we have embarked on a 'new normal', and yet the enforced social distancing can in no way be seen as normal. We are made for community, and our full humanity is not achieved in isolation or separation from others.

Jesus, the second Adam, the 'new humanity', did not hold himself aloof from those around him. He was down and dirty alongside the tax collectors, the prostitutes and the outcasts from society. He showed compassion for those in need, he laughed and cried with his companions, he liked a good party, and he taught how to pray, how to obey, and how to love. He forced those, who thought they knew better, out of their comfort zone. And he calls us to leave the comfort of our old ways and to face the discomfort of living his 'upside down ministry', with renewed humanity.

Jesus made claims using the Old testament name of God: I AM: I am the Bread from heaven; I am the light of the world; I am the Good shepherd; I am the resurrection and the life; I am the way, the truth and the life. He not only shows how we should try to live, what we're aiming for; but he is also the way to achieve it.

My prayer is that our 'new normal' will embrace and reflect wholeheartedly the love and compassion for others shown by our Saviour Jesus Christ. 'In the beginning'.... was a 'new normal'?

**Amen**

**Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples, 'I am with you always'.**

**Be with us today, as we offer ourselves to you.**

**Hear our prayers for others and for ourselves,  
and keep us in your care. Amen**

Our God made us and our universe, and delights in us. Prompted by the Spirit of God in us, let us pray.

We pray for the godly wisdom that is touched by the beauty of creation, delights in the diversity of people, and warms to the possibilities of co-operative prayer and work for the coming of the kingdom.

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the godly wisdom that engenders awareness and guides our response to the real needs of others; that strives not to control but enable, not to manipulate but empower.

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the godly wisdom that gives others both space and support, that encourages and guides, that knows when to speak and when to be silent; that questions the assumptions of worth and cherishes those whom the world discards.

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the godly wisdom that gives us patience in times of adversity and courage to trust in the power of our prayer for those who suffer in body mind or spirit. Particularly we hold in our prayers those whose lives have been affected by Covid-19

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the godly wisdom that entrusts those who have died to this life, to the care of our merciful Lord and Saviour who is the resurrection and the life.

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the godly wisdom that lives simply and thankfully, rejoicing in all that God is and does.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

*Prayers adapted from Susan Sayers*

*Gathering together all our prayers, we say the prayer that Jesus gave us*

**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 trespasses,  
as we forgive those who 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**

*We give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with us now*

**Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,  
for all the benefits you have given me,  
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.  
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,  
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.  
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,  
may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly,**

**and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen**

*We pray God's blessing on each other*

May you treat each other in the same friendly way Christ has treated you.  
May you clothe yourselves in sincere compassion, kindness and patience.  
May your love not be mere words but something real and active.

and

the blessing of God Almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be with you and remain with you,  
and those whom you love and pray for, this day and for evermore. **Amen**

