



Sunday 24th May Ascension - 7th Sunday of Easter:

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

I as Chaplain welcome you to the eleventh St George's Barcelona and Andorra Virtual Church Service. Ascension Day was on Thursday of this week and next Sunday takes us into the last day before June and we celebrate Pentecost. Thank you for your prayers for decisions we have to make about reopening ... please keep praying.

During this service, after each hymn being announced, we will allow time for you to change the YouTube link if you choose. Also, after each passage of our Bible reading is announced we will allow time for you to look it up in your Bibles, or on your Bible Apps or Bible Gateway and follow the reading. We use the New International Version (UK).

At St George's in Barcelona we have a 9.45am services on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. As we did last time that we should have had these services, we include the three hymns we would have sung at this service and suggest it may be a good way to prepare for this service.

Be still, for the presence of the Lord , the Holy One is here

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5S_-zhHfDA

Alleluia, sing to Jesus, his the scepter, his the throne

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56a4w7XxvfY>

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OI2rKRCWmOU>

So let us quieten our hearts as we pray the St George's Prayer:

Our Father, as individuals and as a community may we come to know and love you more and more, may we feel your love and care through each other, may we be witnesses to Christ wherever we are, and by the power of your Holy Spirit, may we be attentive to you, to our neighbour and to your world.

A SONG OF PRAISE TO CALL US TO WORSHIP This is the day that the Lord has made

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cccJhMVFrLs>

TODAY'S PSALM is PSALM 68:1-10

*if you are following this service on paper why not read this antiphonally as we do in church?
That means taking turns ... young and old, or male and female, or one and the rest?*

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm. A song. ¹ May God arise, may his enemies be scattered; may his foes flee before him. ² May you blow them away like smoke – as wax melts before the fire, may the wicked perish before God. ³ But may the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful. ⁴ **Sing** to God, **sing** in praise of his name, **extol** him who rides on the clouds; **rejoice** before him – his name is the LORD. ⁵ **A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows**, is God in his holy dwelling. ⁶ **God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing**; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land. ⁷ When you, God, went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, ⁸ the earth shook, the heavens **poured down rain**, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel. ⁹ You gave **abundant showers**, O God; **you refreshed** your weary inheritance. ¹⁰ Your people settled in it, **and from your bounty, God, you provided for the poor.**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen

THE GREETING

We come together in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Faithful one, whose word is life: come with saving power to free our praise, inspire our prayer and shape our lives for the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SONG OF CELEBRATION - *Particularly for the Sunday School*

We praise God in the morning when the sun is bright, we praise God in the evening when it turns to night <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1XaHxZ2MU>

CONFESSION

✠ Seeing that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. *Hebrews 4.14,16*

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us,
forgive us all that is past and grant that we may serve you
in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen.**

ABSOLUTION *is pronounced and all respond:*

✠ May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw *you* to himself, and cleanse *you* from all *your* sins that we may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

In response we join in the words GLORIA:

**Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God,
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

A SONG OF RESPONSE *Today our response to God's forgiveness is a song that reminds us in the words of the Creed that we will say later:*

Our Father everlasting https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRzI_FbWTkg

THE COLLECT Let us pray together:

✠ Risen, ascended Lord,
as we rejoice at your triumph,
fill your Church on earth with power and compassion,
that all who are estranged by sin
may find forgiveness and know your peace,
to the glory of God the Father. Amen

THE WORD OF GOD

✘ THE FIRST READING ✘ ACTS 1:6-14

⁶ Then they gathered round him and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' ⁷ He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' ⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.' ¹² Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. ¹³ When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴ They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

This is the Word of the Lord, Thanks be to God

✘ THE SECOND READING ✘ 1 PETER 5:6-11

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. ⁸ Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. ¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

This is the Word of the Lord, Thanks be to God

GOSPEL HYMN *to prepare us to listen to the story of our Lord we will sing a prayer of openness to God* In my life lord be glorified, be glorified today

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5bpU3hzMXs>

Alleluia, alleluia. Go and make disciples of all nations, says the Lord.
Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. *All Alleluia.*

✘ THE GOSPEL ✘ JOHN 17:1-11

Hear the Gospel of our Lord according to St John, Glory to you O Lord

After Jesus said this, he looked towards heaven and prayed: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ² For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³ Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ⁴ I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. ⁶ I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸ For I gave them the words you

gave me and they accepted them. They knew **with certainty** that I came from you, **and they believed** that you sent me. ⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ **All I have is yours, and all you have is mine.** And **glory** has come to me through them. ¹¹ I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. **Holy Father**, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, **so that they may be one as we are one.**

This is the Gospel of our Lord, Praise you O Christ

SERMON ASCENSION SUNDAY

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight,
O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

INTRODUCTION

In the grand scheme of things this is just another Sunday, the beginning of another week and here in Barcelona we are asking questions about moving from Phase 0.5 to Phase 1, when and how should the church building re-open its doors, what can we do or not do?

The church has of course never closed. This is not principally to do with Denise and Sunday School, Jenny Shaw and music, Jennie Hebson and youth work or Deborah and I ensuring services. It is to do with people. It is to do with you – the people of God. How you love each other – and I have seen a lot of that during this cloistering -, how you pray for each other, how you encourage each other, how you remind each other to look to Jesus. We ARE church because we all have the same Lord and Master.

You are the people of God, you who are holy, not because we necessarily live that way, although we should, but because God sees us in Christ. We are set apart for God. The Roman Catholic church talks about 'the faithful'. This is not being faithful to St George's; it is being faithful to God. Although that faithfulness to God may well mean that you are faithful to St George's as your church, or as in the language of the Bible, Jesus went to the synagogue 'as was his custom'.

So how is this all relevant? A long beginning and nothing yet about Ascension Day. These disciples saw Jesus go up to heaven on Thursday. They were promised that the Holy Spirit would come. I cannot see that a time-frame was given. What about living this Sunday? No Jesus, no Holy Spirit. What was in their minds? What message is there for us?

Next Sunday we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit but today? How must these early disciples have felt? There was more hope than the Saturday before Easter. They had seen their Master risen and triumphant, he had accompanied them on and off for 40 days.

I suspect they did not realize at that time all that the Ascension meant ... but I also suspect that by this time they were beginning to learn to trust ... whatever happens it is going to be God's good surprise.

So to our readings today. I want to draw out just one message from each to encourage and challenge.

✘ **PSALM FOR THE DAY Psalm 68.1-10 We are to be a people of Praise.**

These people were not living in glorious escapism. There were enemies, there were foes, there were the wicked – but the people of God were going to sing! They were going to be happy and joyful, they were going to rejoice.

This was again no escapism but it was because our God is very earthy and practical: it was to do with orphans, widows, the lonely, the prisoners, the weary and the poor. The same people come up all the way through the Scripture – and elsewhere the other group added are the alien, the stranger. Do you find yourself represented there? I know I do. Our God is active on our behalf. **We are to be a people of Praise.**

✘ **FIRST READING Acts 1.6-14 We are to be a people of Prayer.**

These people had just been told that they would be witnesses, that they would go into the whole world with the story of Jesus, that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came on them. Did they understand what ‘power’ meant or what it meant to say ‘the Holy Spirit will come upon us’? I doubt it. There was a lot they did not understand.

What else? They saw Jesus ascend into heaven, they saw two angels, they received the promise of his return. Then what did they do?

V14 tells us that *They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.* We do not know what this really meant in terms of style, but we do know that as Jews it would have included the regular prayers, the pouring out of their hearts to God and a desire for their hearts to be aligned with God’s. I think prayer, above all, to use my wife’s definition, is ‘becoming one with the heart of God’. These people were becoming formed into the people receptive to the Holy Spirit .. and they did this through Prayer. Notice the presence of the women ... Mary and the others. Women will feature a lot at key points in the book of Acts. However, for us today, the message is that **we are to be a people of Prayer.**

✘ **SECOND READING † 1 Peter 5.6-11 A We are to be a people of Power.**

The disciples in Acts 1 were promised power. We are told in this reading that power belongs God. The most frequent word for power in the New Testament is *dunamis* – from which we get our words dynamic and dynamite. It occurs 116 times. This however is a different word *Kratos* – and it only appears 12 times. It means power is the sense of might or strength or dominion.

We humble ourselves because we recognise God’s dominion.

We cast all our anxieties on him because we recognise God’s strength.

We are alert and sober (calm, self-controlled) because we recognise God’s power.

We resist the devil (normally translated with a small *d* – we are not going to give him any honour!) because we recognise God’s might.

The challenge to me is to ask myself whether my Christian faith is a way of pulling myself up by my own shoelaces or is it that I am truly reliant upon the power of God, upon his grace, upon his goodness and upon his glory. **We are to be a people of Power.**

My first three foci all began with the letter *p* – *praise, prayer and power*. This type of alliteration is rare for me ... let’s turn to the text and see if it continues.

✘ **GOSPEL John 17.1-11 We are a Protected People**

This is Jesus’ prayer before his passion. It is heart being poured out for his disciples. I think in making known to us his desires for his people he is introducing us to what the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit is going to be about.

Jesus prays with his eyes open and looking up. He puts the suffering he is about to endure in the context of glory, authority and eternal life. This is what all that he was to go through is about.

Then even in this moment of extremity – as he does on the cross – he thinks of others. ⁹ *I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.* What

does he pray? He prays in v11 **Holy Father**, *protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.* Jesus prays for their protection – another p – why? ... *so that they might be one as we are one.*

Unity is not something about being ecumenical as a church. We are to be united because in Christ we are already united and because God is united in the Glorious Trinity. This is based on the relationship to the Father and is not so much about organisational structures. ALL who belong to Christ are my brothers and sisters.

But what makes this special is not our life here on earth as the people of God but it is that there is a person in heaven, the ascended Christ, who intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25) and in Romans 8:26 and 27, the Holy Spirit is interceding for us. We are being prayed for by Jesus and the Holy Spirit and we in some marvellous and mysterious way are already in the reality of eternity, a relationship with a God who loves, who cares, who understands, who stands with us ... we could go on. **We are a Protected People**

IN CONCLUSION

Four realities for these people in these days between the Ascension of Christ into heaven and the Pentecost blessing of the Coming of the Holy Spirit from Heaven.

These realities:

1. We are to be a people of Praise. Psalm 68:
2. We are to be a people of Prayer. Acts Chapter 1
3. We are to be a people of Power. 1 Peter 5
4. We are a Protected People John 17

Let us pray:

**O God worthy of all praise,
To you we draw close in the privilege of prayer,
To live your way, we rejoice in your power,
We trust in your blessed protection.**

PS: this protection is not about being free from illness or from financial stress or from the challenges of life. That would not be true to the experience of the saints in Scripture. It is the loving arms of our Lord around us in whatever situation that we are in. Let us bask in that love.

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



✠ *In response to God's Word we join together in the* **THE APOSTLES' CREED** –

This is what we believe.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.**

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

Holy Communion – The Lord feeds us

THE PEACE

✠ Jesus says: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. If you love me, rejoice because I am going to the Father.' Alleluia. *John 14.27,28*
The peace of the Lord be always with you **and also with you.**

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

All may exchange a sign of peace

- Normally the gifts of the people are gathered at this time. During this seclusion our giving can be via the Website or by Standing Order ... or TransferWise ... and information on this is also on the website. St George's needs your ongoing support as our costs continue even when we cannot have services here. Check our website for ways to make online giving easier, particularly through DonorBox.

OFFERTORY HYMN

Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices – sometimes we think that using our hands in worship is an innovation but here it is translated from a German hymn written in 1636

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sR6Kajdt3M>

OFFERTORY PRAYER

✠ Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation:
through your goodness we have this bread to set before you,
which earth has given and human hands have made.
It will become for us the bread of life.

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation:
through your goodness we have this wine to set before you,
fruit of the vine and work of human hands.
It will become for us the cup of salvation.

Blessed be God for ever.

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER for ASCENSION SUNDAY

The Lord is here **His presence is with us**
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give thanks and praise.**

And now we give you thanks because, after his most glorious resurrection,
he appeared to his disciples,
and in their sight ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us;
that where he is, thither we might also ascend, and reign with him in glory.

By the glory of his resurrection he opened the way to life eternal
and by his ascension, gave us the sure hope
that where he is we may also be.
Therefore the universe resounds with Easter joy
and with choirs of angels we sing for ever to your praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
[Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Lord, you are holy indeed, the source of all holiness;
**grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit,
and according to your holy will,
these gifts of bread and wine
may be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ;**

who, in the same night that he was betrayed,
took bread and gave you thanks;
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:
**Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.**

In the same way, after supper
he took the cup and gave you thanks;
he gave it to them, saying:
**Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.**

Great is the mystery of faith

Christ has died:

Christ is risen:

Christ will come again.

And so, Father, calling to mind his death on the cross,
his perfect sacrifice made once for the sins of the whole world;
rejoicing in his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension,
and looking for his coming in glory,
we celebrate this memorial of our redemption.
As we offer you this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving,
we bring before you this bread and this cup
and we thank you for counting us worthy
to stand in your presence and serve you.

Send the Holy Spirit on your people

and gather into one in your kingdom
all who share this one bread and one cup,
so that we, in the company of all the saints,
may praise and glorify you for ever,
through Jesus Christ our Lord;

by whom, and with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

**Blessing and honour and glory and power
be yours for ever and ever.
Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

THE COMMUNION

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.
Though we are many, we are one body, because we all share in one bread.

GIVING OF COMMUNION

Draw near with faith. Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you, and his blood which he shed for you. Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,
blessed are those who are called to his supper.

Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word, and I shall be healed.

The body of Christ broken for you

The blood of Christ shed for you

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

✠ Eternal God, giver of love and power,
your Son Jesus Christ has sent us into all the world
to preach the gospel of his kingdom:
confirm us in this mission,
and help us to live the good news we proclaim;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Together we say:

**Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you
our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.**

The Dismissal – The Lord sends us out

FINAL HYMN **Father of kindness you have poured out grace** Let us take the words of this hymns as an encouragement and strength for the week to come

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITQnbOihe3Y>

BLESSING

Christ our ascended King pour upon you the abundance of his gifts
and bring you to reign with him in glory;
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be among you and remain with you always.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord Alleluia! Alleluia!

In the name of Christ. Alleluia! Alleluia!