

Glastonbury Together in prayer

A news sheet for members of Glastonbury churches during the crisis caused by Covid 19

Prepare to prepare!

The Christian calendar includes periods to prepare for major events. It is only a short time since we were in Advent and now in just a few short weeks we will enter Lent a longer period of preparation for Easter. Excluding the Sundays the period of Lent is 40 days to replicate the time Jesus spent praying in the desert. Three Gospels record that Jesus fasted whilst in the desert and because of this it is traditional for Christians to give up something for Lent. So what will you do during Lent this year? Now is the time to prepare for your own Lenten observance and decide - do you give up something or do something extra? Fasting and giving up luxuries has been traditional but giving time to prayer and reflection is also a good way spend Lent. Do you have a Christian book you have been meaning to read? Should you take the time to read more of the Bible? Should you join an online course or look out for Lent related material on the broadcast media? There is no detail on the BBC yet but a Jesuit website has announced that Radio 4 will be hosting a retreat during Lent this year. Exploring aspects of Ignatian spirituality the retreat will point listeners to 'Knowing Jesus'



Lent Course anyone

Following the success of the zoom sessions for the week of prayer consideration is being given to holding a lent course on line this year. In 2020 our course was interrupted by the virus so was not completed. By holding a course on line it is hoped that we can complete it this year. The decision on which course to use is being discussed by the enabling group. It is at the moment envisaged that the course will run twice each week. Once in the middle of the day and once in the evening but on different days. Details will be circulated as soon as they are known.

A life studying Christian History

Sr Elizabeth Rees a strong supporter of Churches Together in Glastonbury and author of various books on Christian history has died following a long fight with cancer. An interest in early Christianity was sparked when her parents took the family around visiting Roman villas, Celtic saint's dwellings and medieval churches. She wrote a number of books related to Celtic Christianity as well as books on Christian Symbols and the early Church in Greece. Her final book was in preparation when she was diagnosed with cancer and not knowing how long she had her publishers worked hard to get it finished. In the end the book was issued in good time and Liz had time to put her affairs in order before she died. Knowing that all was in place she was at peace.

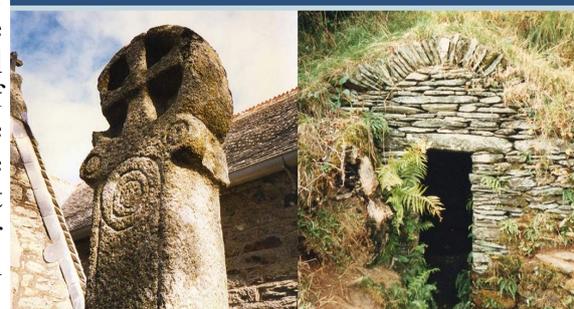
Sr Elizabeth ran retreats and gave talks on medieval Christianity. She was living as a Consecrated Virgin. In the early Church, before the evolution of convents, vowed men and women lived in the local community, and the Bishop received their vows. A Rite of Consecration was drawn up by Pope Gregory the Great in the seventh century, using ancient prayers taken from the Acts of the virgin martyrs, Saints Agnes and Agatha. Showing her commitment to unity, when she celebrated the 25th anniversary of her consecration she was joined by twenty clergy from every Christian denomination, including Catholic and Anglican Bishops.



EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN SOUTH-WEST BRITAIN

Wessex, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and the Channel Islands

ELIZABETH REES



Growing in Unity

Is Christ divided?

Falling on the Sunday the 7th day of the week of prayer was not covered by the on-line meetings. The readings for this day are often used for the week of prayer as they relate strongly to unity. The first reading comes from Paul's letter to the Corinthians where factions have grown up and Paul asks "is Christ divided?" The second reading is from St John's Gospel where Jesus prays "that they may all be one". Please take time to reflect yourself on the meditation and questions that would have been used if a meeting had been held.

Meditation

On the eve of his death, Jesus prayed for the unity of those the Father gave him: "that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe". Joined to him, as a branch is to the vine, we share the same sap that circulates among us and vitalizes us.

Each tradition seeks to lead us to the heart of our faith: communion with God, through Christ, in the Spirit. The more we live this communion, the more we are connected to other Christians and to all of humanity. Paul warns us against an attitude that had already threatened the unity of the first Christians: absolutizing one's own tradition to the detriment of the unity of the body of Christ. Differences then become divisive instead of mutually enriching. Paul had a very broad vision: "All are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God" (1 Cor 3:22-23).

Christ's will commits us to a path of unity and reconciliation. It also commits us to unite our prayer to his: "that they may all be one. . .so that the world may believe" (Jn 17:21).

"Never resign yourself to the scandal of the separation of Christians who so readily profess love for their neighbour, and yet remain divided. Make the unity of the body of Christ your passionate concern."

[The Rule of Taizé in French and English (2012) p. 13]

Questions

- Are you resigned to the scandal of separation of Christians?
- What part of your tradition is vital and life giving and what can you learn from what is vital and life giving within other Christian traditions?
- What could be the impact on the world of greater unity between the churches?

You Servants of God

With a lectionary message on the 5th Sunday of ordinary time relating to the preaching of the Gospel it is perhaps appropriate to look at a hymn by the prodigious preacher and hymn writer Charles Wesley. You (Ye) servants of God was written in 1744 and can be found in 625 hymnals. In the hymn Wesley gives a strong call to us all to preach. In the first verse he writes for us to sing: "*You servants of God, your Master proclaim, and publish abroad his wonderful name; the name all-victorious of Jesus extol; his kingdom is glorious and rules over all.*" We are **all** servants of God so the message is that we should **all** proclaim and publish his works and the glory of his kingdom in **all** that we do. The Epistle reading from the Catholic lectionary for the sixth Sunday supports this where Paul writes that everything we do should be to the glory of God.

In the second verse of the hymn we learn from Wesley that God is still present with us so the great congregation should sing his praises. Let us all cry aloud, the hymn continues, to honour the Son. The angels proclaim praises and fall down to worship. So let us then adore Him and give Him glory. With the Angels we give honour and blessing and never ending thanks for the infinite love we receive from Jesus.

A look at the lectionary - 5th and 6th Sundays

The lectionary Epistle and Gospel readings for the fifth Sunday are the same for the Catholic and Revised Common lectionaries but are completely different on the 6th Sunday which this year is the Sunday before Lent. On the fifth Sunday in 1 Corinthians 9:16-23 Paul talks about his reasons for preaching the Gospel. The preaching thread recurs at the end of the Mark reading where Jesus after healing in one place goes out to nearby villages so he can preach there as well.

On the 6th Sunday the Revised Common lectionary has readings connected by light. The Epistle reading is from 2 Corinthians where Paul reports that God said "Let light shine out of darkness". Following this the Gospel reading is the Transformation when Jesus was surrounded by prophets in a bright light. The disciples

who were with him were told not to tell anyone until after the resurrection, a command which would have seemed strange to them. In the Catholic lectionary Paul in 1 Corinthians tells us that we must do everything for the glory of God and to avoid anything that will cause another to stumble. Follow Paul's example as he follows the example of Christ. The Gospel reading tells of the healing of the Leper who when told not to tell anyone went and spread the word of his healing. As a result Jesus could not go openly into towns seeking lonely places where he was still found by those searching for him. So despite seeming different the two lectionaries have a common thread of Jesus giving commands, one which was obeyed by his followers and one which the leper ignored.