



St Paul's Church, Knightsbridge
The Diocese of London



The Solemn Eucharist

The Sixth Sunday of Easter

Sunday, 25th May 2014 at 11 a.m.

Welcome to St Paul's Knightsbridge, part of the Diocese of London and a church of the worldwide Anglican Communion. If you are visiting us from another church, please make yourself known to the sidesmen or to one of the clergy after the service. Members of all Christian churches are welcome to share with us in this Eucharist – and those who do not wish to receive the Sacrament are invited to approach the altar at the time of Communion, to receive a blessing.

There is a loop system in the lower parts of the church for the benefit of the hearing-impaired. Hearing aid users should switch their devices to 'T'.



giftaid it *During the service a collection will be taken for the work of the church in this parish, throughout the Diocese of London and further afield. Please use the special envelopes at the end of each pew to maximise your giving through the 'Giftaid' scheme.*



Members of the congregation are asked to ensure that mobile phones are switched off (or to silent) and are reminded that the taking of photographs or the making of audio or video recordings during services is prohibited.

Cover image:
Paul Preaching at the Areopagus
Sir James Thornhill, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1729-31

Order of Service

The Introductory Rite

At 11 a.m. a bell is rung. The Servers and Sacred Ministers enter and process to cense the High Altar before returning to the platform. All stand to sing:

ENTRANCE HYMN

**Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
To his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Who like me his praise should sing?
Alleluia. Alleluia!
Praise the everlasting King.**

**Praise him for his grace and favour
To our fathers in distress;
Praise him still the same for ever,
Slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Alleluia. Alleluia!
Glorious in his faithfulness.**

**Father-like, he tends and spares us;
Well our feeble frame he knows;
In his hands he gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes.
Alleluia. Alleluia!
Widely as his mercy flows.**

**Angels, help us to adore him;
Ye behold him face to face;
Sun and moon, bow down before him;
Dwellers all in time and space.
Alleluia. Alleluia!
Praise with us the God of grace.**

Words: H.F. Lyte (1793-1847)

Music : 'Praise, My Soul', John Goss (1800-1880)

THE GREETING

When all are in their places the Celebrant says:

✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord be with you
and with thy spirit.

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

THE PRAYER OF PREPARATION

**Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open,
all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name;
through Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

After the 'Gloria has been intoned, all sit, taking their lead from the celebrant. The choir sings:

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO

Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te. Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam. Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens, Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris. Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis. Quoniam tu solus Sanctus. Tu solus Dominus. Tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

*Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, goodwill towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly king, God, the Father almighty. O Lord, the only-begotten son, Jesus Christ: O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us. For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art the most high, in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.*

Music: Missa Assumpta est Maria – Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594)

All stand when the sacred ministers stand.

THE COLLECT

The Celebrant introduces a period of silence:

Let us pray.

Thereafter, he sings:

God our redeemer,
who hast delivered us from the power of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of thy Son:
grant, that as by his death he hath recalled us to life,
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord,
who liveth and reigneth with thee,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

All sit.

The Liturgy of the Word

THE FIRST READING

The Acts of the Apostles 17: 22-31

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him — though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we too are his offspring."

Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.'

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God.

THE PSALM

Psalm 66: 7-18

7 O praise our God, ye people : and make the
voice of his praise to be heard;
8 Who holdeth our soul in life : and suffereth not
our feet to slip.
9 For thou, O God, hast proved us : thou also hast
tried us, like as silver is tried.
10 Thou broughtest us into the snare : and laidest
trouble upon our loins.
11 Thou sufferedst men to ride over our heads :
we went through fire and water, and thou
broughtest us out into a wealthy place.
12 I will go into thine house with burnt-offerings
: and will pay thee my vows, which I promised
with my lips, and spake with my mouth,
when I was in trouble.
13 I will offer unto thee fat burnt-sacrifices, with the
incense of rams : I will offer bullocks and goats.
14 O come hither, and hearken, all ye that fear
God : and I will tell you what he hath done for
my soul.
15 I called unto him with my mouth : and gave
him praises with my tongue.
16 If I incline unto wickedness with mine heart :
the Lord will not hear me.
17 But God hath heard me : and considered the
voice of my prayer.
18 Praised be God who hath not cast out my
prayer : nor turned his mercy from me.

THE SECOND READING

1 Peter 3: 13-end

A reading from the First Epistle of Peter

Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

GRADUAL HYMN

**Holy Spirit, Truth divine,
dawn upon this soul of mine;
Breath of God and inward Light
wake my spirit, clear my sight.**

**Holy Spirit, Love divine,
glow within this heart of mine;
kindle every high desire;
perish self in thy pure fire.**

**Holy Spirit, Peace divine,
still this restless heart of mine;
speak to calm this tossing sea,
stayed in thy tranquillity.**

**Holy Spirit, Joy divine,
gladden thou this heart of mine;
in the desert ways I sing,
"Spring, O Well, forever spring."**

*Words: Samuel Longfellow (1819-92)
Music: 'Orientis partibus', French mediaeval melody
Harmonised by R. Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)*

All remain standing.

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The Cantor sings:



Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord.
I know them, and they follow me.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

All turn to face the Deacon.

THE GOSPEL READING

The Deacon says:

The Lord be with you **and with thy spirit.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ, according to John.

Glory be to thee, O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

John 14: 15-21

At the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to thee, O Christ.

THE SERMON

The Reverend Prebendary Nick Mercer
*Vicar General to the London College of Bishops
And Honorary Assistant Priest*

Silence is kept.

THE CREED

The Celebrant says:

Let us make affirmation of our faith.

**I believe in one God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible:
And in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten son of God,
begotten of his father before all worlds,
God of God, light of light,
very God of very God, begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation
came down from heaven,
and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost
of the Virgin Mary, and was made man,
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried,
and the third day he rose again
according to the Scriptures,
and ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of the Father.
And he shall come again with glory
to judge both the quick and the dead:
whose kingdom shall have no end.
And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceedeth from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together
is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets.
And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.
And I look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.**

THE PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, let us pray to the Father.

All kneel. Either of the following responses may be used:

Lord in thy mercy or Lord, hear us
hear our prayer Lord, graciously hear us.

For the departed, these words may be used:

Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord
and let light perpetual shine upon them.

May they rest in peace
and rise in glory.

At the end, a brief period of silence is kept for personal prayer. All say:

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

All sit.

THE NOTICES

THE PEACE

The Celebrant says:

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said:
'Peace be with you.' Then were they glad when they saw the Lord. Alleluia!

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and with thy spirit.

The Deacon says:

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

All exchange a sign of peace with those standing close by.

THE OFFERTORY

The gifts of the people are carried to the altar and presented.

A collection is taken to support our work, ministry and charitable giving.

Please use the Gift Aid envelopes provided, remembering to fill in all the details.

The altar is prepared and the gifts of bread and wine, the altar, and the sanctuary party is censed.

THE COLLECTION HYMN

**The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never,
I nothing lack if I am His
And He is mine forever.**

**Where streams of living water flow
My ransomed soul He leadeth,
And where the verdant pastures grow,
With food celestial feedeth.**

**Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love He sought me,
And on His shoulder gently laid,
And home, rejoicing, brought me.**

**In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy cross before to guide me.**

**Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
Thy unction grace bestoweth;
And O what transport of delight
From Thy pure chalice floweth!**

**And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
Within Thy house forever.**

Words: H. W. Baker (1821-77)

Music: 'Dominus regit me', J. B. Dykes (1823-76)

All sit.

The choir sings:

OFFERTORY MOTET

Praise our Lord all ye Gentiles, praise him all ye people,
Because his mercy is confirmed upon us, and his truth remaineth for ever.
Amen.

Words: Psalm 117, version from The Primer, or Office of the blessed Virgin Marie (1599)

Music: William Byrd (c.1540-1623)

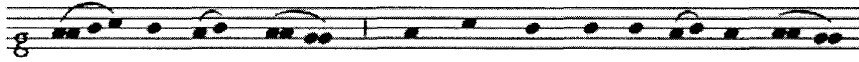
*When the Thurifer approaches, all stand to be censed.
After being censed, all remain standing for the Eucharistic Prayer.*

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

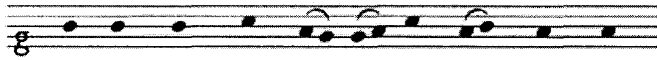
The Celebrant sings: *All respond:*



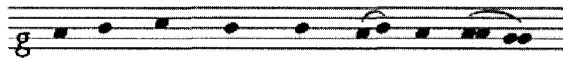
The Lord be with you *R.* and with thy spi-rit.



Lift up your hearts. *R.* **We lift them up un-to the Lord.**



Let us give thanks un - to the Lord our God.



R. **It is meet and right so to do.**

It is very meet, right and our bounden duty,
that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto thee,
O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God,
through Jesus Christ, thine only Son, our Lord.
For he is thy living Word;
through him thou hast created all things from the beginning,
and fashioned us in thine own image.
Through him thou didst redeem us from the slavery of sin,
giving him to be born of a woman,
to die upon the cross, and to rise again for us.
Through him thou hast made us a people for thine own possession,
exalting him to thy right hand on high,
and sending forth through him thy holy and life-giving Spirit.
But chiefly are we bound to praise thee
because thou didst raise him gloriously from the dead.
For he is the true paschal lamb who was offered for us,
and has taken away the sin of the world.
By his death he has destroyed death,
and by his rising to life again he has restored to us everlasting life.
Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven,
we laud and magnify thy glorious name, evermore praising thee and
saying:
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth,
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua, Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis.
*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be
to thee, O Lord most high. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.*

Music: Missa Assumpta est Maria – Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594)

The prayer continues:

Accept our praises, heavenly Father,
through thy Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ,
and as we follow his example and obey his command,
grant that by the power of thy Holy Spirit
these gifts of bread and wine may be unto us his body and his blood;
who, in the same night that he was betrayed, took bread;
and when he had given thanks to thee,
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.

Likewise after supper he took the cup;
and when he had given thanks to thee, he gave it to them, saying:
Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me.

Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father,
we remember his offering of himself
made once for all upon the cross;
we proclaim his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension;
we look for the coming of his kingdom
and with this bread and this cup
we make the memorial of Christ, thy Son, our Lord.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Accept through him, our great high priest,
this our sacrifice of thanks and praise,
and as we eat and drink these holy gifts
in the presence of thy divine majesty,
renew us by thy Holy Spirit, inspire us with thy love,
and unite us in the body of thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,
by whom, and with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be unto thee,
O Father almighty, world without end.

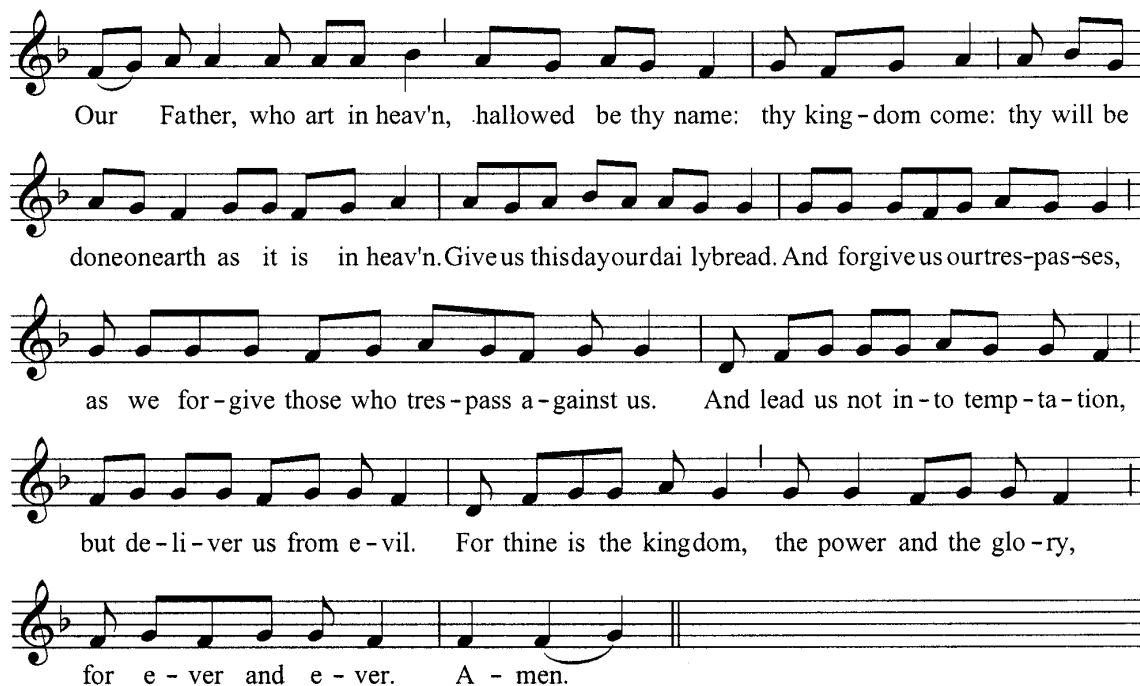
*All sing, boldly: **Amen.***

THE LORD'S PRAYER

All kneel. The Celebrant sings:

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us.

All sing:



Our Father, who art in heav'n, hallowed be thy name: thy king - dom come: thy will be
done on earth as it is in heav'n. Give us this day our dai ly bread. And forgive us our tres - pas - ses,
as we for - give those who tres - pass a - gainst us. And lead us not in - to temp - ta - tion,
but de - li - ver us from e - vil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glo - ry,
for e - ver and e - ver. A - men.

THE FRACTION

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated bread, saying:

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.**

THE GIVING OF HOLY COMMUNION

By way of invitation to receive the Sacrament the Celebrant says:

Behold 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 that thou shouldst come under my roof,
but speak the word only and my soul shall be healed.**

The Sacred Ministers and Servers receive the Holy Communion, followed by the people, beginning with those seated at the front of the Nave.

All who normally do so in their own Church are invited to receive the Sacrament.

Those who do not wish to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion are invited to approach the altar to receive a blessing, carrying this booklet in their hands as an indication to the Priest.

The choir sings:

AGNUS DEI

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.

*O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us peace.*

Music: Missa Assumpta est Maria – Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594)

MUSIC DURING COMMUNION

Salvator mundi, salva nos,
qui per crucem et sanguinem redemisti nos,
auxiliare nobis, te deprecamur, Deus noster.

O Saviour of the world, save us,
who by thy cross and blood hast redeemed us,
help us, we pray thee, O Lord our God.

구세주여 저희를 구하옵소서
십자가와 성혈로서 저희를 구속한
하느님께 비나이다, 저희를 도우소서

Words: Antiphon at Holy Unction and for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

Music: Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)

PRAYERS AFTER COMMUNION

The Celebrant introduces a period of silent prayer.

Let us pray.

All kneel.

Eternal God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life:
grant us grace to walk in his way, to rejoice in his truth,
and to share his risen life; who liveth and reigneth, now and for ever.
Amen.

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

THE CONCLUDING HYMN

All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew,
me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendour, light and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
newborn worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the almighty Giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

Still from man to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ, his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

Words: Robert Bridges (1844-1930)

Music: 'Michael', Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

All remain standing.

THE BLESSING & THE DISMISSAL

The Celebrant says:

The Lord be with you
and with thy spirit.

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

The Deacon sings:

Go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

ORGAN VOLUNTARY

played by Jeremy Cole

Fugue in B minor, BWV 544
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)

All remain standing as the Servers and Sacred Ministers depart.

The Acts of the Apostles

This book is the sequel to the gospel according to Luke. Beginning with Jesus' ascension, Luke tells the story of the beginnings of the church. By no means a comprehensive history, it does however describe the spread of the church from Jerusalem to all of Palestine, and as far as Greece. The episodes he reports show how Christianity arose out of Judaism. He shows us something of the struggles the church underwent in accepting Gentiles as members. The Holy Spirit guides and strengthens the church as it spreads through much of the Roman Empire.

Today's reading: Acts 17:22-31

On his second missionary journey, Paul has crossed Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and has arrived in Athens, a city known for its interest in the divine and its openness to discussion of philosophies and religions. He argues for Christianity in the synagogue and in the marketplace. Epicurean and Stoic philosophers see him as dabbling in philosophy and proclaiming "foreign divinities" (v. 18), of Jesus and the resurrection (possibly thought by them to be a god). He is invited to join in philosophical discussions at the "Areopagus" (v. 19) on edge of the marketplace. He presents the good news to a people of a culture very different from the one in which it was first proclaimed. He explains it in their terms.

After praising the Athenians for their piety and gods ("objects of your worship", v. 23), he draws attention to an altar to "an unknown god". He tells them: I know that god; he is God; he "made the world ..." (v. 24) and is "Lord" of it. He depends on nothing ("as though ...", v. 25), so he is greater than all Greek gods; he is the source of all ("gives ... life"). Not being confined to specific "shrines" (v. 24) and needing no sacrifices ("nor ... served ...", v. 25) shows his greatness. God created "all nations" (v. 26) from proto-human, Adam ("one ancestor"): Stoics too believed in the unity of humanity. Deuteronomy 32:8 says that God "fixed the boundaries of the peoples"; dividing history into eras is basic to faith (v. 26b). The Greeks thought of the seasons of nature's cycles and the earth's habitable zones. They searched and groped for God (v. 27); we go further: we find, obey and serve him.

Paul now quotes Greek writers in defence of his arguments (v. 28). For "God's offspring" (v. 29) idols are inadequate objects of worship; only the true God, the creator of heaven and earth and of all lower orders of spiritual being, is worthy of our worship and service. Jesus has brought an era when turning to God is imperative; "ignorance" (v. 30) of his ways is no longer acceptable – because God will have Jesus ("a man", v. 31) judge people's worthiness. This we know because he has raised Jesus. Raising "a man" to divine status is hard for Paul's hearers to accept. Some are open to further discussion but others are not (v. 32).

The Psalms

Psalms is a collection of collections. The psalms were written over many centuries, stretching from the days of Solomon's temple (about 950 BC) to after the Exile (about 350 BC.) Psalms are of five types: hymns of praise, laments, thanksgiving psalms, royal psalms, and wisdom psalms. Within the book, there are five "books"; there is a doxology ("Blessed be ... Amen and Amen") at the end of each book.

Psalm 66:8-18

"All the earth" (v. 1, not only Israel) is invited to join in praising God, seen as powerful in his "deeds" (v. 3). Throughout history he has done great things "among mortals" (v. 5). His rule is world-wide, over all "the nations" (v. 7). Vv. 8-12 are a

communal thanksgiving. God preserves us in life (v. 9a); he protects us. In past difficulties he has "tested us" (v. 10), purifying us as "silver" ore is changed to pure silver. Israel has been subjugated by other people (perhaps during the Exile), yet after enduring every kind of difficulty ("through fire and ... water", v. 12), God has brought her to freedom again. In vv. 13-20, an individual (perhaps the king) vows to offer sacrifice in the Temple in thanks. He invites the community to hear "what [God] ... has done for me" (v. 16). He was repentant so God listened to him (v. 19) and has heeded his requests made in prayer. "Blessed be God" (v. 20) for hearing and for his covenant ("steadfast") love.

The First Epistle of Peter

An elder in Rome wrote this pastoral exhortation to those in charge of churches in Asia Minor. ("Babylon" is a common code-name for Rome; see Revelation 17:5-6.) The opening greeting claims that Peter is the author, but today most scholars agree that it was written in his name, to give it authority (a common practice at that time.) The addressees appear to be Gentiles, rural folk, both resident aliens and household slaves, in Asia Minor. Christians can expect to suffer, to be ostracized, to be "called names": they are in the midst of a pagan culture. Though they are "aliens" in this world, God has given them "a new birth ... into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading" (1:3-4).

Today's reading: 1 Peter 3:13-22

The author has noted the persecution being endured by his readers; now he treats the topic explicitly. Who will weaken you in your faith or cause you to lose it? (v. 13) As v. 16 ("when you are maligned") shows "if" (v. 14) is an understatement: when is meant. Suffering for good conduct puts you in a happy and fortunate ("blessed") state with God. Reverence for God should transcend all fears. Be prepared to defend your commitment to Christ, and your faith ("hope", v. 15) in him, to anyone who asks. Continue to live ethical, godly lives ("keep your conscience clear", v. 16) so that your persecutors may be shamed (and desist from harrowing you). It is morally "better" (v. 17) to suffer for doing God's will.

Christ, "the righteous" (v. 18), is your example of suffering; he brings you to God. He really died ("in the flesh"), but he overcame death. Even the condemnation carried out in the Flood is overcome by the power of the gospel, for Jesus proclaimed it (while dead) to the wayward dead ("spirits in prison ... who did not obey", vv. 19-20), so that their fate might be reversed. (See also 4:6.) The saving of Noah and his family ("eight persons", v. 20) "through water" is the forerunner of baptism. It saves not by ritual cleansing ("removal of dirt", v. 21) but rather by putting you in a state to be found worthy at the Last Day ("appeal"), sharing as we do in Christ's death and resurrection. Christ is now in heaven, where heavenly powers ("angels ...", v. 22) are subject to him.

The Gospel according to St John

John is the fourth gospel. Its author makes no attempt to give a chronological account of the life of Jesus (which the other gospels do, to a degree), but rather "...these things are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." John includes what he calls signs, stories of miracles, to help in this process.

Today's reading: John 14:15-21

Jesus continues to prepare his disciples for his departure. He has given them a special commandment: to "love one another" just as he has loved them (13:34). Love requires obedience and (v. 21) those who love him are those who obey. Keeping

Jesus' commandments makes possible the continuance of their relationship with him – but how? The Father will send them “another” (v. 16) representative of God, also in God, as their “Advocate” or champion: one who will support, help and intercede for them. This is the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of truth” (v. 17), of faith, of revealed doctrine. He is neither perceivable nor knowable by unbelievers, so they have no access to him. But “you” both recognize (“know”) him, because he will be within you and will remain (abide) in you. Jesus will come to you in the Spirit (v. 18). After Jesus' death, unbelievers will not perceive him, but you will; because he lives (in a special way), so will you (v. 19). When he returns at the end of this era (v. 20), you will recognize that you have been taken into intimate association with both the Father and the Son. But (v. 21) this will only be so for followers who have divine love and show it by obeying me. Only to them will Jesus, the risen Christ, appear.

NOTES ON THE MUSIC

Title/composer

Text

THE CHOIR OF ST PAUL'S KNIGHTSBRIDGE

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Stephen Farr

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Jeremy Cole

The Music & Musicians of St Paul's Knightsbridge

St Paul's Knightsbridge maintains a regular professional choir of eight and the services of both a Director (Stephen Farr) and Assistant Director of Music (Jeremy Cole). The organ is by Henry Willis & Sons and dates from 1888. The musical repertoire, Sunday by Sunday, is diverse and often boldly ambitious: at the Solemn Mass at 11 am there is always a choral mass setting and two seasonal anthems, one at the Offertory and the other during Communion. Full details of the music for each week – along with a programme note – is published in the service paper. The musicians also sing and play for weddings, baptisms, funerals and memorial services at the church.

St Paul's Knightsbridge is grateful to The Berkeley Hotel for its generous and neighbourly support of the music.

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