



**Daily Reflections for the
Benefice of Bradford on Avon
Holy Trinity, Westwood
and Wingfield
28 September – 3 October 2020
*contributed by Ali Green***

The Collect for the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the
prayers

of your people who call upon you;

and grant that they may both perceive and know
what things they ought to do,

and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil
them;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Day **Monday, 28 September**

Read Also many of those who became believers confessed and disclosed their practices. A number of those who practised magic collected their books and burned them publicly; when the value of these books was calculated, it was found to come to fifty thousand silver coins. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.
Acts 19: 18-20

Reflect Paul, on his third missionary journey, spends a couple of years in Ephesus, a very religious community where magic and occult arts are popular. Paul speaks so powerfully as he shares the Good News that many are convinced of its truth, and they bring their religious books to make a very expensive bonfire, showing publicly how they have changed.

The converts' action demonstrates that what they previously valued is worthless in comparison with their new-found faith. As Paul writes in one of his letters,
"I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ" (Phil 3:8).
Through the ministry of Paul and Luke, Christianity is spreading into Asia, Macedonia, and Greece.

Pray Lord, you are love itself:
Do not let us lose sight of you
But always bring us back to the light of your face,
For you live and reign for ever and ever.

Act Last Saturday 14 new deacons were ordained by Bishop Nicholas, and Bishop Karen and Bishop Andrew between them ordained 8 priests. Hold them in your prayers as they begin a new chapter of Christian service across the Diocese.

Remembering the Ephesian converts burning their books, are there any old superstitions or unhelpful habits that the Spirit is inviting you to get rid of?

Day **Tuesday, 29 September**
Michael and All Angels

Read About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival of Unleavened Bread.)
Acts 12:1-3

Reflect Like many rulers through history, Herod Agrippa I is ready to persecute a minority faith community if it will make him politically popular. So he murders James, the first of the twelve to be martyred. Jesus promised no special protection for even His closest followers; He warned them to be ready for persecution. Eusebius, early bishop and historian, relates a story from Clement of Alexandria, who said the soldier guarding James before the judge was so affected by his witness that he too declared himself a Christian and was also willingly executed for his faith alongside James.

Pray Loving God, open our hearts to your word
And to the power of the Holy Spirit.
Give us love to discover your will
And strength to carry it out today,
For you are our light, and in your radiance we live.

Act Look further into the story of brothers James and John. Both asked Jesus to make them His chief lieutenants (Mark 10:35-40). You'll see that Jesus' prediction in this Gospel passage is fulfilled in James' martyrdom. John fulfilled it by a lifetime of devoted service to God despite repeated attempts to kill him.

On this day, the Feast of Michael and All Angels, remember with thanks other followers of Christ who have special meaning for you, either through their martyrdom or through a life of faithful service. In the company of angels and spirits of the saints made perfect, may we come to share their joy in heaven.

Day **Wednesday, 30 September**

Read For from the greatness and beauty of created things
comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.
Wisdom 13:5

Reflect The Wisdom of Solomon, or Book of wisdom, extols this virtue as a
gift from God. Lady Wisdom, it says, came into being with
Creation, and God is her source and guide. St Paul, writing in
Romans (1:20), speaks similarly of how the natural world all around
attests to its generous and loving Creator.

Folliott S Pierpoint (d 1917), a Bathonian, was mesmerized by the
beauty of the countryside around him, and wrote many nature-
inspired poems and hymns, including For The Beauty Of The Earth.

Pray For the beauty of the earth,
 For the beauty of the skies,
For the Love which from our birth
 Over and around us lies:
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our Sacrifice of Praise.

Act How does the natural world inspire you?
Do you have some favourite hymns, poems or prayers that speak
to you of the wonders of Creation? You might like to read or listen
to them today – or even write and illustrate your own Creation-
inspired verses.

In this season of Creationtide, pray that leaders will find the
political will to safeguard the future of our planet from further
devastating loss of species and biodiversity.

Day **Thursday, 1 October**

Read You know for yourselves that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions. In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'
Acts 20:34-35

Reflect Paul, on his third missionary journey, travels westwards overland from Antioch to Ephesus, then by sea around cities in what is now Greece and Turkey, and finally back across the Mediterranean to Tyre, north of Jerusalem.

Here he is talking to the elders of the church at Ephesus, who have travelled south to meet him at Miletus. He reminds them of how he has set an example of being free from greed and of working hard to provide for his own needs and those of his co-workers.

The words of Jesus he references are not found in the Gospels; Paul is repeating, from the oral tradition he has received, a saying that must be one of the most-quoted teachings of Our Lord, used not only by Christians but by many others.

Pray Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous,
teach me to serve you as I should,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labour and ask not for reward,
save that of knowing that I do your most holy will.
St Ignatius Loyola

Act Remember some times when you have received something precious – a listening ear when you were troubled; a helping hand or a useful gift when you were in need; a word of encouragement when you were anxious or in doubt.
Is there someone today to whom the Spirit is calling you to be generous with your attention, energy, time or other gifts?

Day **Friday, 2 October**

Read "Have you commanded the morning since your days began,
 and caused the dawn to know its place,
 so that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth,
 and the wicked be shaken out of it?"

Job 38: 12-13

Reflect These verses appear near the end of the story of Job, who has been suffering great afflictions. Here, God speaks to Job directly, showing him his limited understanding and wisdom. What a wonderful picture the author paints: God brings the dawn, shaking out from the earth the wickedness done in the night as we might shake off breakfast crumbs from our clothing.

Would that we, in Jesus' name, could similarly just shake out all the corruption, injustice and ills from the skirts of the earth today. But like Job, we must acknowledge our ignorance and lack of understanding of God's ultimate purpose and ways, and put our trust and faith in God without knowing all the answers to our questions.

Pray Take away, good Lord, the sin that corrupts us;
 give us the sorrow that heals and the joy that praises
 and restore by grace your own image within us,
 that we may take our place among your people;
 in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Psalms 51 Collect

Act We can never understand all of God's ways, but we can make choices. We can, for instance, strive for those good things that we know God wants of this world: a place of abundance and peace where every living being is able to flourish as God intended. In what ways can you further the wellbeing of the earth, our dwelling place and God's gift to us? It could be something as simple as picking up litter, recycling an unwanted garment, sowing some bee-friendly flower seeds, cutting down plastic waste or preparing a plant-based meal.

Day **Saturday, 3 October**

Read When Paul came to the steps, the violence of the mob was so great that he had to be carried by the soldiers. The crowd that followed kept shouting, "Away with him!"
Acts 21:35-36

Reflect Many Jews who have arrived in Jerusalem for Pentecost are convinced that Paul is trying to destroy the law and insult them by bringing Gentiles into areas of the Temple reserved for Jews only. They seek to restore order and peace through violence. The mob is prevented from accomplishing their goal by the quick action of the commander of the Roman troops, who has him arrested.

The myth that violence solves problems is in direct opposition to Jesus' teachings. He clearly always takes the part of nonviolence. There is no way to peace other than peacemaking itself.

Pray My Lord Jesus Christ, may your peace be with me.
In you, O Jesus, true peace, may I have peace upon peace eternally.
Through you may I come to that peace
Which surpasses all understanding,
There where, in gladness, I may see you in yourself.
St Gertrude of Helfta

Act Call to mind those people and communities that today are suffering the results of violence, for example the people of Yemen and the Sudans; black people experiencing discrimination in the USA and other countries; victims of homophobia, sex trafficking and domestic abuse.
Pray for a change of heart for those who perpetrate violence, and endurance for those working to alleviate their victims' plight.