



Third Sunday after Trinity, 28th June 2020

Dear Friends,

In our reading from St Paul today we hear him tell the Romans that outside of Christ we find our lives controlled by desires we do not always like. When we come to Christ we are no longer involuntary slaves, victims to the distractions of life, but willing servants, attentive to the will of God who became a servant for us in Jesus Christ. This imagery made me think of the many distractions we can face to our prayer life at home. I have a little chapel in the attic at Holy Trinity Vicarage. It is a lovely space to pray and is blissfully quiet, but sadly it is currently like an oven! So, I have been exploring praying in different places around the house. The garden is one of my favourite places to pray, but even this has its disadvantages being on such a busy corner of town, and full of distractions (called weeds!) . The church however is cool and welcoming, as I walk in from the heat of the day and am enveloped by the stillness and peace it is an oasis. 'How awesome is this place! It is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven' we hear Jacob say about Bethel – the house of God. Seeing the swallows skating across the sky and nesting in our eaves at the moment always makes me think of Psalm 84: ' Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.'

It is a psalm that truly captures our longing to be united to God, enjoying the many rooms of the Father's house which Jesus promises to his followers. 'How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord'.

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I'm delighted to be able to tell you that you too can finally come and share in this oasis now that the archdeacon has approved the proposal for opening St Mary's as a space for personal prayer. We hope that Holy Trinity will soon follow. St Peter's is still in the hands of the insurers following the flood damage.

In our gospel reading today we hear that the followers of Jesus are so closely identified with Jesus that those who welcome them are receiving and welcoming Jesus. Having people to steward and to welcome the faithful back into church and to help meet the regulations we must meet is an absolutely essential ministry if we want to be able to open churches. Is this a ministry to which you are being called? If so please contact your wardens and offer your services. The tasks will not be onerous, and if we are to maintain the opening of our churches then we will need people to donate an hour or so of their time so that people can pray safe and stay safe. More details about St Mary's opening are in the notes.

Every blessing,

Fr Tom