



The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, 7th June 2020

Dear Friends,

This has been a very dark week for our world. Besides being in the throes of a global pandemic we have seen clashes in Hong Kong and in the United States, and we have even seen the leader of the 'free world' tear gas his own people for a photo opportunity outside a locked church, brandishing a copy of the Bible.

I have read a variety of commentaries trying to understand what Mr Trump thought he was trying to communicate in this gesture, and can't say that any of them made much sense to me. It seems that following a fiery 'law and order' speech in the White House rose garden his gesture was one which sought to allay himself in the minds of voters with the supreme authority. A closed Bible, a closed church, a closed-minded President who abuses his own people when they demand justice in peaceful protest after yet another incendiary race related death caused by those who should be protecting them. In the notes this week I have included the joint statement from the Archbishop's of Canterbury and York, in which they reassert that 'God's justice and love for all creation demands that this evil is properly confronted and tackled'. There is no greater vehicle for tackling this injustice than Christ's Church.

I have been trying to use some of my lockdown time to catch up with the poems I am writing to go with Jeremy Thomas's wonderful Gospel paintings and I have just completed the 'Beatitudes'. Jesus's

Assistant Priest: Reverend Fr. Tom Bates-Bourne SSC

St. Mary's Priory – Christchurch – Holy Trinity – St. Peter's

☒ Holy Trinity Vicarage, Baker Street, Abergavenny, NP7 5BH

☎ 01873 855889 ☒ subprior@stmarys-priory.org



manifesto to his followers is to 'hunger and thirst for what is right', and to warn us that standing up for what is right may well lead to persecution. I have to say that I am shocked to see the day when that persecution should take the form of gassing protesters on the streets of a free country. On last Wednesday evening I was able to represent the Church at a socially distanced silent vigil in Linda Vista Gardens as we stood in solidarity with all those affected by the terrible events around the world this week.

This Sunday is Trinity Sunday. An opportunity for us to marvel at the divine mystery that is the inner life of God, the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is a wonderful mystery that is not set to exclude us. Indeed, if anything the incarnation and God's life in Jesus is an extended hand to draw us in. The Trinity are three distinct persons, but are also inseparable and indivisible, and this mystery can help us to understand how we should react to these recent circumstances.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu talks about the theology of an African philosophy called 'Ubuntu'. It's a term which is about the connectedness of and relationship between all things. It says quite literally: 'I am who I am, because you are who you are.' To diminish someone else is to be diminished ourselves. To exalt someone else is to be exalted. If there are homeless people on our streets, queues at our foodbanks, refugees risking their lives to get to safety in our country, then it is we who are diminished and less than the people



that God created us to be; made in His image and channels of his generous love.

When people like George Floyd (and there have been many) can be killed on the streets of their home country as a result of institutional racism we are all made less than the people who God created us to be. When the image of God is honoured in all people then we will be exalted. Until that day let us 'hunger and thirst' for what is right.

To finish on a personal note, this is a very strange time to be preparing to move parish and far from ideal as I would like to be able to be with you all and enjoying our last few months in Abergavenny together. It is more and more surreal as dates are being fixed in the diary without quite knowing what they will mean: will they be 'real events' or will they be 'online' gatherings? I am already attending deanery chapter meetings via Zoom in Barnsley deanery, and I am amazed at how cool Paul is about moving into a house he has never seen, in a place he has never even visited. I myself have only been there fleetingly but I am excited about what God is doing there and ways in which we may be involved. Clergy spouses are amazing people who put up with so much, and I am completely in awe.

Your prayers and support throughout all of this are absolutely invaluable. Many thanks for all you are doing.

With Every blessing,

Fr Tom