

Holy Trinity Anglican Church
Reverend Michael Fleming
Easter 6
May 9, 2021

Celebrant: The parishes of the Diocese of Ottawa are located on the unceded territorial lands of the Algonquin peoples.

All: **May we live together in harmony and peace.**

Celebrant: Alleluia! Christ is risen.

All: **The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Celebrant: May his grace and peace be with you.

All: **May he fill our hearts with joy. Alleluia!**

Celebrant: Almighty God,

All: to you all hearts are open,

all desires known,

and from you no secrets are hidden.

Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts

by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,

that we may perfectly love you,

and worthily magnify your holy name;

through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Celebrant: Glory to God in the highest

All: and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father,

We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your Glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,

You take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;

You are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,

You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,

In the glory of God the Father. Amen

Celebrant: Merciful God, you have prepared for those who love you riches beyond imagination. Pour into our hearts such love towards you that we, loving you above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. **Amen**

The First Reading is from the book of Acts, Chapter 10, Verses 44 to 48

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter said, “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 98

Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things.

With his right hand and his holy arm has he won for himself the victory.

The Lord has made known his victory; his righteousness has he openly shown in the sight of the nations.

**He remembers his mercy and faithfulness to the house of Israel,
and all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.**

Shout with joy to the Lord, all you lands; lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.

Sing to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the voice of song.

With trumpets and the sound of the horn shout with joy before the King, the Lord.

Let the sea make a noise and all that is in it, the lands and those who dwell therein.

Let the rivers clap their hands, and let the hills ring out with joy before the Lord, when he comes to judge the earth.

In righteousness shall he judge the world and the peoples with equity.

The Second Reading is from the first Book of John, Chapter 5, Verses 1 to 6

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Gospel

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

Celebrant: The Holy Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ according to the blessed St. John - 15: 9-17

All: **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.

The Gospel of Christ.

Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ

The Homily

The first reading for this morning is a very short snippet from the tenth chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles in which we arrive at the end of the story. I often wonder how and why those who are responsible for selecting the lectionary readings for a Sunday do what they do – sometimes we come at the beginning of a story and leave before the end; sometimes we come in the middle of the action and haven’t a clue of what happened before or after our brief moment in the narrative; sometimes we are welcomed in at the end of the incident like today..... I wanted to share the entire chapter as Luke wrote it but thought that that would perhaps tax your patience a little. But, to understand the moment which was encapsulated for us this morning, we really do need to know how it came to be. So

Cornelius was a centurion in the military cohort assigned to the city of Caesarea. While a Gentile by birth, and a Roman to boot, he had been attracted to the theology and culture of the Jewish community in the city and became what was known as a “God-fearer”. As such, Cornelius supported the work of the synagogue both financially and as a volunteer among them. One day, he had a vision in which God told him to send for a man named Peter who was staying in the town of Joppa. Trusting in the Lord, Cornelius sends his servants to find Peter and bring him back to Caesarea.

At the same time, Peter is relaxing on the rooftop of the house in which he is staying in Joppa. There, he too has a vision – in his dream, a large blanket filled with all sorts and varieties of animals comes at him and The Voice says, “Get up Peter....and eat.” Peter’s response is, “There’s a lot in there that I am forbidden by The Law from eating, Lord” to which God replies with just a hint of anger, “Who says that anything I have created is unclean? Now, get up and eat.” Just as he is about to chow down in his vision, he is awakened by his host who tells him that servants from Cornelius the Centurion are waiting to escort him to the Roman headquarters. Hearing The Voice tell him that this is part of The Plan, Peter goes with them and meets Cornelius and his family.

Peter is greeted by this righteous and God-fearing man and is invited to share with his family whatever he feels called upon to tell them. Peter preaches about Jesus of Nazareth and begins by saying, “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism, but accepts people from every nation who love him and do what is right.” He then shares the story of Jesus’ calling, life, death and resurrection and of how God had ordered those who had been with the Nazarene to go into the world and share the good news of the Kingdom to one and all that they encountered. He goes on, “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in Jesus receives the forgiveness of their sins through his name”.

As Peter said this, a second Pentecost (if you will) erupted – all in the household, male and female, slave and free, Jew and Gentile, adult and child were bathed in the power of the Holy Spirit. They began to speak in the language of the Spirit and signs and wonders were shown. Immediately afterwards, Peter led them all to the river where they were all baptized in the name of Jesus.

This story is one of the most important tales told in the post-resurrection Scriptures and that is why I wanted to tell even in an abbreviated version, the whole event, from calling to baptism. The “hero” if you will of this story is not Cornelius, nor is it Peter...rather, it is the Spirit as she moves through this extended family. Here is a concrete example of how God does not play favourites. All in the household received their portion of the Spirit’s gift and blessing. The Spirit was not contained, nor imprisoned by human limitations, human definitions of who is in and who is out – for God, all his creation is beautiful and blessed and is welcome in the Kingdom.

From this time onwards, the early church became more dedicated to its ministry of sharing the good news and healing communities as God placed them before them. There were no stipulations created, no rules imposed save that those who came were to be placed in the hands of God and then the apostles were to back off and let God do what God does best – love everyone into the Kingdom.

Somewhere along the line, sometime in the history, we lost sight of the inclusiveness of God and of the wild abandon of the Holy Spirit. We became so rule-bound and regulation-driven that the Word we proclaim is lost in the minutia. Often, we forget that we are daily given the opportunity to exercise ministry in our families, among our friends and communities and with strangers who might flit through our life for but a moment. We may miss the privilege of being present to another because they do not fit our definitions and limitations of who is deemed acceptable. For me, this is one of the moments that Paul warned the Ephesians about. He wrote to them and said, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander along with all forms of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God has forgiven you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly beloved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God... grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love”

This encounter between Cornelius and Peter, was to change forever the mission and ministry of the church – from a community which had been so deeply rooted in its Jewish past that it failed to see the totality of God’s gift to the whole world, to one which embraced one and all with the hugs of the Father, the peace of The Son and the joy of the Holy Spirit. May we grow more and more into such a community here in Metcalfe, in our diocese, in our country and in our world.

Amen

The Apostle’s Creed

Celebrant Let us confess the faith of our baptism, *as we say,*

All I believe in God,

the Father almighty,

creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit

and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,

**was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again
to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of the People

Celebrant: Christ is risen and the power of the resurrection fills the world today with new life. With hope and expectation, we therefore lay before Him all our hopes and needs. For this we pray to the Lord,

All: Lord, hear and have mercy

Celebrant: That the Church may boldly and faithfully proclaim the Resurrection of Jesus to those who as yet do not know or believe, we pray to the Lord...

All: Lord, hear and have mercy

Celebrant: That the leaders of the Church, remembering especially Shane our Bishop and Michael our Assisting Bishop, may embody the mysteries of new life which we celebrate in our liturgy, we pray to the Lord...

All: Lord, hear and have mercy

Celebrant: That the leaders of our nations and world may give priority to those with the greatest needs in the distribution of the world's resources of food and medicine, we pray to the Lord...

All: Lord, hear and have mercy

Celebrant: That in the light of Christ's victory over death, all the peoples of the earth may work together to overcome violence against all, especially the poor, the marginalized, the weak and the lost, we pray to the Lord...

All: Lord, hear and have mercy

Celebrant: That we may remember how your Son Jesus came to the outsiders, those who belonged to small or rejected groups in his society. Help us to welcome all who come to us for hope, help and love and help us to see in their faces the face of our Lord and Saviour and for this we pray to the Lord...

All: Lord, hear and have mercy

Celebrant: That those who work on the front lines during this pandemic may know the power of your love and the strength of your care, remembering especially our medical personnel and all first responders, those who manage and maintain all our essential services and especially those who work in our grocery stores and our gas stations so our basic needs might be met, we pray to the Lord...

All: Lord, hear and have mercy

Celebrant: That those who have died may share in the promise of new life, we pray to the Lord...

All: Lord, hear and have mercy

Celebrant: God of glory, you know the deepest desires of our hearts. As we celebrate the Resurrection of your Son, make us faithful to you in all that we do and say; we ask this in the blessed name of Jesus.

Amen

We ask you to watch over all our parish family, remembering especially Zachariah, Marjorie, Cheryl, Jeanette, Roy, Emerson, Irene, and their families.

In the Worldwide Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we pray for The Anglican Church of Kenya.

In our Diocesan Cycle, we pray for Church of the Ascension, Ottawa, and their Priest, The Reverend Rhonda Waters. We pray for the Church of Julian of Norwich, and their Priest, The Reverend Monique Stone, and Deacon Elizabeth December.

We pray for all Church Musicians serving in the Diocese of Ottawa.

The Confession

Celebrant: My sisters and brothers in Christ,

All: God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy; he welcomes sinners and invites them to his table. Let us confess our sins, confident in God's forgiveness.

Celebrant: Most merciful God,

All: we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us, that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Celebrant: And as our Lord and Saviour has gifted to the Church, so we pray:

**All: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Additional Prayers

Celebrant: Today we pray for all the persons whom we have judged as different from us and whom we have excluded from our fellowship because of the barriers and definitions we have created. Help us to see how the Holy Spirit is at work, opening hearts and minds to seeing the beauty and loveliness of every person; help us to open ourselves to receiving all who come to us seeking You and help us to see in the eyes of the poor, the lost, lonely, the stranger the face of our Lord and Saviour and in his blessed name we pray. Amen

All: Loving Father, we gather to celebrate your presence among us, to offer you our praise, our prayers, our love, and our obedience. Through the gift of your own Spirit, you abide in us and with us. We rejoice in your love for us and in the life which we have been given through the sacrifice of your Son Jesus Christ. Open our eyes to recognize your presence here among us; open our hearts to accept the love which you have for us; open our minds to the truth that You would reveal to us. All glory and praise belong to you with your Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Celebrant: Loving God, on this day we pray for mothers everywhere. To the moms who are struggling; to the moms who are filled with incandescent joy; to the moms who are remembering children who have died and pregnancies that miscarried; to the moms who decided that other parents are the best choice for their babies; and to the moms who adopted their children and loved them fiercely; to those who are experiencing frustration or desperation in infertility; to those who mother colleagues, neighbours, mentees and anyone who needs love; to those remembering moms no longer among us; to those moving forward from moms who did not or could not show love; for moms who strive to maintain a balance between the demands of home and their responsibilities in the world of compensated labour; to those who through either choice or circumstance find themselves raising children on their own – today is a day to honour the unyielding love and care for others we call “motherhood”, wherever and however we find it and for their lives and gifts we give you our thanks and praise. Amen

All: Blessed are you, O God, full of faithfulness and steadfast love. How awesome are your deeds and how glorious is your name on earth and in heaven. We celebrate who you are and what you have done for us. You hold our lives in your hands and keep our feet from stumbling. We have come together led by your Holy Spirit to sing your praise, to confess our failings and receive your blessed assurance that we are still loved by you. As we prepare to leave this gathering and continue our journey, we ask you to bless our homes and families and call us once again to gather in your most blessed name. Amen

Blessing and Dismissal

Celebrant: May the Lord bless us and keep us. May he show his face to us and be merciful to us. May he turn his countenance to us and give us peace. May the Lord be with us today and always and, wherever we are, may we be with him always and always. So go now to love and serve the Lord and each other and let us be happy in all the power of the Holy Spirit this day and forevermore. Alleluia!
All: Thanks be to God. Alleluia!