 **Weekly Newsletter**



Photo courtesy of Chris Maddock

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If you would like help or to speak to a member of the ministry team please contact the office on 01784 253525 or office@sthilda.org Father Joseph can be contacted on 01784 254237.

**Goodness is stronger than evil**

The origin of this text is attributed to Desmond Tutu’s ‘*An African Prayer Book’* published in 1995. Surely Archbishop Tutu is one of the worlds’ most recognizable and famous spiritual leaders, Clearly, so well associated with the end of apartheid and the reconciliatory work that followed the rise of the ‘rainbow’ nation Nelson Mandela rebuilt South Africa.

Born in Transvaal in 1931, Desmond initially became a teacher in 1955. This choice followed his father’s career choice but also a childhood struggling to survive tuberculosis, increasing discrimination and related poverty. Unsurprisingly with draconian legislation in 1953 relegating black children to much lower levels of education, he changed career and was ordained in December 1960. He ministered in North London from 1962 to 1966 and then returned to the Eastern Cape and began opposing the apartheid regime. Yet despite a lifetime of seeming protest, he has been universally applauded for his goodness and strength of character. Amazingly this text was also referred to in our Lent book; *‘Saying Yes to Life’* written by Ruth Valerio plus the Rainbow theme associated once again with peace, justice and heroic causes (NHS). This biblical reference is one of many similar, but Romans 12.21 *‘Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good’* comes to mind as relevant today. It has been set to music by John Bell (and others) and you can hear it in an extract from the *Love and Anger* album at https;//www.wildgoose.scot/product/love-anger-cd/

Often used as a short chant, and one we can learn at St Hilda’s - the full words are;

Goodness is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate;

Light is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death.

Victory is ours, victory is ours through him who loved…….us.

Victory is ours, victory is ours through him who loved…….us.

Let us contemplate these words quietly together.

Christina Veasey

**Memories from celebrating VE Day**

The celebrations marking VE Day, have brought back quite a number of memories for me.  A boy, at that time, living with my parents and sister, in one of three short roads off the North Circular Road in North London. We had a bonfire, of course, a fair bit of which was constructed from debris still lying around on the bombsite behind our houses.  I recall a group of passing American service men, coming along our road dragging a chunk of tree, saying, "Here yer ah, kids" and throwing it on the bonfire.  We gave them a cheer! I think someone found a gramophone and records; several couples danced.  Tea was handed round despite the rationing of most items being in force. It was a long time ago, but the memory remains.

Terry Rickson

**The UK  Blessing**

A good friend asked me why our nation’s leaders have not called on the people of Britain to pray for a miracle in the face of Coronavirus which is causing so much damage to our country and its peoples?  They did in May 1940 when our army was trapped in Dunkirk and the Royal Navy said that they could rescue only 30 thousand men off the shallow beaches.  The people thronged places of worship and prayed for their boys.  The Navy came up with a plan using small boats, Hitler decided to pause his army briefly to replenish their supplies of fuel and ammunition and God provided a few days of calm seas and weather contrary to the usual storms at that time of year.
The result was that the Navy managed to rescue 340 thousand men, and we did not lose the war.

The Church of England has over 100 bishops and 18,000 active ordained clergy who should be praying; as should all the other faith groups in our island.  If you have an internet connection, type in, **‘The UK Blessing Churches’**and join massed choirs singing a beautiful prayer.  You will be in good company – over a million people have already done so.  The moral is that if we want a miracle we must believe and really work for it.

 Robert Dobbie

**VE Day 75th Anniversary Service Sermon**

75th years ago, on the 8th May, Britain and its Allies formally accepted Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender, after almost six years of war. Prime Minister Winston Churchill at 15:00, announced on the radio that following Germany's surrender the previous day, the war in Europe had come to an end. There were spontaneous celebrations across the country, and Princess Elizabeth, and her sister Princess Margaret, were able to experience all the excitement with a group of friends, venturing out in London. VE Day marked the beginning of the end of a conflict that wiped out a generation across many nations in the world. Innocent lives were lost, dreams and hopes shattered, tears shed, suffering inflicted, the world was never the same in the aftermath. It is a harrowing narrative of what can happen when we become dehumanized. VE Day was celebrated with mixed feelings, the joy of the liberation, with the deep sorrow of so many lives lost. It would not have been possible without the courageous and sacrificial actions of those who lost their lives fighting for the freedom of their countryman and women. "Never so much was owed by so many to so few." I am not making a case to glamorize armed conflict, where countless lives have been, and are lost, due to religious, political, cultural, and ethnic motivations.

But what does VE Day has to do with the Prodigal Son? What does it have to do with us?

Today’s New Testament reading from Luke’s Gospel, also known as the Lost Son, is one of the best-known parables of Jesus. It can only be found in the *Gospel of Luke*. It follows on from the Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Parable of the Lost Coin, part of a cycle on redemption.

It tells the story of a father who has two sons. When the younger son asks the father for his inheritance, the father grants his request. But the younger son is prodigal (i.e., wasteful and extravagant) and squanders his fortune, eventually finding himself destitute. Eventually, the younger son is forced to return home empty-handed but hoping to beg his father to accept him back as a servant. Instead, to the son's surprise, he is not scorned by his father but welcomes him back with a celebration and welcoming party. The older son, reacting with envy, refuses to participate in the festivities, but the father tells him, "for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found

!"

The younger son in the prodigal son wanted his share of the inheritance now, and there, he could not wait. He claimed it was his given right. He took it for granted. But rather than use it wisely, he squandered his fortune, losing it all.

After one of the darkest episodes in human history, fast-tracking 75 years, what have we learned? We have become a consumerist society, with a culture of the here and now. I am happy as long as my immediate needs are met. Alas, the happiness it brings is short-lived, perpetuating a repeat cycle, where our lives become akin to the Inception movie, living in a dream within a dream, an illusion of self-control over our lives. But along comes a pandemic, and the world as we knew it was shattered. We were confronted with the reality of ourselves, not able to hide behind the many things that had become a given in our lives, which distracted and disconnected us from ourselves, from others, and ultimately from God. We learned that what we value the most, what we cannot live without, is love. We craved embracing our loved ones, resorting in many cases to have contact behind windows, the looking glass to which we saw a reflection of ourselves and of those we love.

We mourn the many lives that have been lost through the pandemic, tragically taken away from us, in many cases in isolation. We mourn our loved ones and the life we used to have; the things we have taken for granted. And the world feels like a lonely place.

But in the midst of all of this, there are signs of hope. Nature is recovering from years of abuse and neglect. The silence is deafening, birds claiming the skies, their singing bringing the music of hope and new life. We value open spaces, gardens, fresh air. We open our doors to clap together for those who put others before themselves, to look at our neighbours, which in many cases, we had not even met before. A frail and elderly man, with a lion heart, and sheer determination, took one small step, but a giant leap for a nation, which needed to be reminded of the sacrifices that his generation had endured so that we can now celebrate the 75th anniversary.

We have returned home, to the things that matter, we are reminded that one person can make a difference, by considering the greater and common good. And we are not scorned by a loving Father, which says to us, I have been waiting for you, welcome, all is ready. We have truly become prodigal sons and daughters.

We will be remembered by the way we respond to this pandemic. This VE day 75th anniversary marks the liberation of our nation, from war, and ourselves. The gift is given to us by those we now remember and celebrate, and the lives lost to this pandemic, cannot be forgotten. It is a choice of how we move forward. We shall remember them.

Fr Joseph

**Deuteronomy 31:6**

**6**Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.”

###### Appeal for sleeping bags and tents

St Hilda is committed to help those who find themselves homeless, for whatever reason, by providing sleeping bags and tents. So far it has relied on donations from the local community, but due to Covid-19 it has run out. Although more invisible than ever, homelessness has not gone away. If you have some which you no longer need, or are able to make a donation to purchase new ones, please do get in touch. It is a small step for one person, but a big step for our community, to pull together in order to help those who do not have the security of a place to stay. Thank you so much in advance.

**Weekly Newsletter**

Please email Denise at office@sthilda.org or Fr Joseph at Vicar@sthilda.org if you have anything to be included in the weekly newsletter.

**Crossroads**

Please email Rosemary at crossroads\_ashford@hotmail.com if you have anything to be included in the parish magazine. The most recent edition is available on our website**.**

**Sunday Eucharist**

The 9.30am Sunday Eucharist can be viewed via our Facebook page, our new YouTube channel (St Hilda’s Ashford), and Twitter. Please see our website (www.sthilda.org) for updates and the weekly service sheet.

**Please hold in your prayers and thoughts this week those who are affected by the Corona Virus as well as the family and friends of those below.**

**The Sick**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| James Bedford  | Libby Mills | Roy Stone |
| Pamela Claridge | Raymond Nation | Sandra Swain |
| Robb Clarke | Michael O’Hagan | Rev. Peter Taylor |
| Ann Considine | Elizabeth Savill-Burgess | Chick Wilson |
| Michael Dixon | Delphine Scrivener | Peter Wilson |
| Dennis Goff | Riley Shaw | Jo Wood |
| Jim Hennessey | Anne Shenton | Nic |
| Penny Howell | Elsie Stone |  |

 **The Recently Departed**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Margaret Kerr | Peter Sheldon | Doris Searle | Richard |
| Beverly | Irene | Elizabeth Connor | Patricia Pouffou |
| Ronald Cobb | David Ibbotson | Mary Berry | George Brown |
| Donna Marshall | Christine Brown |  |  |

**A prayer for VE Day**

*From the Act of Commitment for Peace*

Lord God our Father,
we pledge ourselves to serve you and all humankind, in the cause of peace,
for the relief of want and suffering,
and for the praise of your name.
Guide us by your Spirit;
give us wisdom;
give us courage;
give us hope;
and keep us faithful now and always.
Amen.