



The United Benefice of St Helen, Burghwallis and St Mary Magdalene, Campsall

17th May 2020

In this week's reading from St John's Gospel, Jesus speaks of things to come. Change will come because he will leave them. The disciples have got used to seeing the risen Jesus in their midst but the time is coming when he will not be with them. But Jesus gives them a promise that he will not leave them like orphans because he will leave them the gift of the Holy Spirit – God's presence within them. Jesus is looking towards the events of Ascension Day, which we celebrate on Thursday, when Jesus leaves them as a physical presence but will remain present with them in the Holy Spirit with the promise of Pentecost. When I speak to families coming for baptism, I remind them that our understanding of God is of the one God who created us and stands outside and beyond us. Of Jesus, God incarnate who stands beside us as one of us and of the Holy Spirit – the sense of God dwelling within us that brings us comfort when times are difficult. As the Creed of St Athanasius reminds us: Not three Gods but one God. It is how we encounter God more fully as above, within and beside us.

This week the lockdown has been relaxed a little. Some people are returning to work but we are all urged to remain cautious. Eventually our churches will re-open. But life will not return to normal because we will have been changed by the experience. It seems that many people have accessed the prayers of the church on TV, on line, or by post – it is an encouraging sign that God is with us even when we cannot physically be together.

When St Paul spoke to the Greeks on the Hill of Mars – the *Areopagus* – he spoke about the 'unknown God' unknown that is to the Greeks. He reminded them of that universal search for God, which is a universal search for meaning in life and of that universal experience of personal prayer. In these difficult times many people have felt the spirit of God move within them to make them turn to God in Prayer. May this time of searching lead to the discovery of the truth of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Fr Richard

This is the Spirit of Truth

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