



Christian Unity Week

Ecumenical Celebration

Parishes of Hastings Old Town and St. Mary Star of the Sea

Sunday January 19, 2024

6.00pm

At St. Mary Star of the Sea Church, High Street



DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?

This year the ecumenical celebration has been prepared by the community of Bose, an ecumenical monastery of brothers and sisters in northern Italy. In Bose, community life is shaped by the rhythm of regular prayer. As the bells call the sisters, brothers and guests to prayer, they all assemble at the church.

As we celebrate 1,700 years since the Council of Nicaea, this worship service has, at its heart, the Nicene Creed. Reflecting this, the scripture readings for this year focus on belief.

At this service the gathered community is invited to reflect on the story of Martha's confession of faith in Jesus as narrated in John 11:17-27. Each is called to sit with Jesus' provocative question to Martha: "Do you believe this?"

As a response to the proclamation of the Word, we affirm our faith together in a solemn recitation of the Nicene Creed. This moment is marked by the sharing of the light of Christ, symbolised by lighted candles. Candles are distributed and the light spreads through the gathering. We stand together as light of the world, united in love, affirming: "We believe...". At the end of the creed, the lighted candles are placed together in a suitable and safe receptacle, to burn together as a reminder of our continued calling to Christian unity.

Another distinctive feature of this year's worship is the inclusion of early Christian writers, most notably in the prayers of intercession. For the sisters and brothers of Bose, these writers are a living source for their shared life.

Welcome and Invitation Father Eamonn

Seventeen-hundred years ago, after a long period of persecution and fear, the Church gathered in Nicaea to affirm the Christian faith.

This faith, always ancient, always new, is our unending joy. Christ has risen from the grave, defeating death and darkness and bringing us everlasting life!

Blessed be God, now and forever.

Come, let us bow down before the Lord our God.

Assembly **Holy God, Holy and Strong, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us.**

Let us celebrate the joy of the resurrection.

Hymn 322: Jesus Christ is risen today, alleluia!

Deacon Let us pray.

Creator God, we worship and adore you.
Standing with all creation, we know ourselves to be made for your glory.
Reflecting your image and likeness, we feel your touch upon our lives.
Remembering your faithfulness, we bless you that you never give up on us.
Hearing your call to us, through story, saint and sage,
we bless you for your compelling presence in our midst.
Lord of life, we worship and adore you.
Standing at your tomb, with Mary, we weep.
Failing to know you, we hear you call us by name.
Knowing you again, we want to cling to you.
In your gentle love, you restore us
and compel us to call others to life in your name.

Spirit of power, we worship and adore you.
Recalling creation's story, we feel your brooding presence.
Travelling from slavery, we follow you into freedom.
Standing before the cross, we seek you in the darkness.
Burning with your fire, we are compelled to discipleship.

Creator God, Lord of Life, Spirit of power,
We worship and adore you,

Assembly Amen.

Listening to the Word of God

John 11:17-27

Reader 1 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother.

(Silence)

Reader 2 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him."

(Silence)

Reader 3 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

(Silence)

Reader 1 Do you believe this?

(Silence)

Reader 2 Do you believe this?

(Silence)

Reader 3 Do you believe this?

Assembly **We believe, help our unbelief.**

Gospel Reading Father Mat

John 20:24-29

Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So, the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord". But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe".

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you". Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe". Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Responsory

Reader Great is the Lord, great is his might.

Assembly **Great is the Lord, great is his might.**

Reader His wisdom has no bounds.

Assembly **Great is his might.**

Reader Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Assembly **Great is the Lord, great is his might.**

Hymn 71: Be still and know..

Sermon

Hymn 358: Let there be love shared among us

Celebrating Our Common Faith (please use the words of the Creed as written below)

Reader Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."

In many Christian traditions, at baptism, the baptised (or sponsor) is handed a lighted candle. Jesus also calls his followers to be the light of the world. We are each bearers of the light of the risen Christ. We receive this light from Christ through one another.

The first candles are lit. The light is shared with those nearby, who in turn share the light throughout the assembly.

Reader We now invite you to share the light with one another with the words, "The light of Christ".

When all the candles have been lit, a reader continues:

Reader Let us love one another, so that with oneness of mind,
we may confess the faith of the Church, ancient and new:

Assembly **We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us all, and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
and was made human.**

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
 he suffered and was buried.
 On the third day he rose from the dead in accordance with the
 scriptures.
 He ascended to heaven
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
 He will come again in glory
 to judge the living and the dead
 and his kingdom will have no end.
 We believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the Lord, the giver of life,
 who proceeds from the Father.
 Who, with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified,
 who has spoken through the Prophets.
 We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
 We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
 We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,
 and to life in the age to come.
 Amen.

Hymn 81: Bless the Lord my soul *as the candles are placed centrally*

Prayers of Intercession

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| Deacon | In this time of intercession we join our prayers in the present with the faith of the Church in ancient times. |
| Reader 1 | <p>For all things were made out of nothing, and their being would again sink into nothing, if the Author of all things did not hold it by the hand of governance.</p> <p><i>(Gregory the Great [c. 540-604])</i></p> |
| Assembly | Lord of life, we receive all creation from your hand and by your providence. Teach us to live in your world with care and seeking justice for all that you have created. |
| Reader 2 | <p>I call this faith: the intelligible light which by grace dawns in the soul, that supports the heart, and grants the gift of hope.</p> <p><i>(Isaac of Nineveh [7th century])</i></p> |

Assembly **Loving God, grant us the gift of hope in abundance in a world troubled by division and violence. Strengthen your people afflicted by apathy and fear.**

Reader 1 What wonder then, if, coming to God, we first of all profess that we believe, seeing that, without this, not even common life can be lived.
(Rufinus of Aquileia [c. 344-411])

Assembly **Merciful God, forgive us for the times we have failed to live a common life as Christians. Draw us more deeply to one faith in you so that we may witness to the world.**

Reader 2 Truth sees God, and wisdom contemplates God, and from these two comes a third, a holy and wonderful delight in God, who is love.
(Julian of Norwich [c. 1343- after 1416])

Assembly **Heavenly Comforter, we pray that we may trust more in the gifts of your truth, wisdom and love than in the cleverness of our thinking.**

Reader 1 The light of Christ appeared and made the darkness of the prison disappear and hallowed our birth and destroyed death, loosing those same fetters in which we were enchained.
(Irenaeus of Lyon [c. 135-198])

Assembly **Compassionate Lord, lead us to work together so that wherever there is darkness and oppression, suffering and injustice, we may bring your light and freedom.**

Deacon As brothers and sisters of Jesus, together we pray in the words he taught us:

Assembly **Our Father...**

Hymn 542: O Lord Hear my prayer

Concluding Prayer

(adapted from the Bose community)

Deacon Almighty God,
accept our praise and thanksgiving
for what already unites us.
Hasten the hour when we will recognise each other
in the one communion you willed
and for which your Son prayed.
Blessed be God, now and forever.

Assembly **Amen.**

Sending Forth:

Reader:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:3–9)

Final blessing: Fathers Eamonn and Mat

The Lord be with you.

Assembly **And also with you.**

May he who is our peace and has made us one,
grant that we may present one another to God in the one Spirit.

And may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit descend upon you and remain with you forever.

Assembly **Amen**

Hymn 80: Bind us together