

Wednesday Worship 10th February 2021—St Scholastica

Opening prayers and lighting of a candle

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus,
All **giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ.**
Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:
All **let us sing to God with thankful hearts.**
Open our lips, Lord:
All **and we shall praise your name.**

Collect

Almighty God,
you have created the heavens and the earth
and made us in your own image:
teach us to discern your hand in all your works
and your likeness in all your children;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things,
now and for ever.
All **Amen.**

Praise

Blessed are you, Sovereign God, creator of all,
to you be glory and praise for ever.
You founded the earth in the beginning
and the heavens are the work of your hands.
In the fullness of time you made us in your image,
and in these last days you have spoken to us
in your Son Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.
As we rejoice in the gift of your presence among us
let the light of your love always shine in our hearts,
your Spirit ever renew our lives
and your praises ever be on our lips.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
All **Amen.**

Hymn: O Lord of every shining constellation

1st Reading: Ecclesiastes 8

Who is like the wise man?
And who knows the interpretation of a thing?
Wisdom makes one's face shine,
and the hardness of one's countenance is changed.

Keep the king's command because of your sacred oath. Do not be terrified; go from his presence, do not delay when the matter is unpleasant, for he does whatever he pleases. For the word of the king is powerful, and who can say to him, 'What are you doing?' Whoever

obeys a command will meet no harm, and the wise mind will know the time and way. For every matter has its time and way, although the troubles of mortals lie heavy upon them. Indeed, they do not know what is to be, for who can tell them how it will be? No one has power over the wind to restrain the wind, or power over the day of death; there is no discharge from the battle, nor does wickedness deliver those who practise it. All this I observed, applying my mind to all that is done under the sun, while one person exercises authority over another to the other's hurt.

Then I saw the wicked buried; they used to go in and out of the holy place, and were praised in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity. Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the human heart is fully set to do evil. Though sinners do evil a hundred times and prolong their lives, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they stand in fear before him, but it will not be well with the wicked, neither will they prolong their days like a shadow, because they do not stand in fear before God.

There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of the wicked, and there are wicked people who are treated according to the conduct of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. So I commend enjoyment, for there is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat, and drink, and enjoy themselves, for this will go with them in their toil through the days of life that God gives them under the sun.

When I applied my mind to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how one's eyes see sleep neither day nor night, then I saw all the work of God, that no one can find out what is happening under the sun. However much they may toil in seeking, they will not find it out; even though those who are wise claim to know, they cannot find it out.

Prayer of response

Lord God, source and giver of wisdom,
fill us, we pray with your Holy Spirit,
that we might see and do what is right,
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Psalm 34.1, 9-14

I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

O fear the Lord, you his holy ones,
for those who fear him have no want.
The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.
Which of you desires life, and covets many days to enjoy good?
Keep your tongue from evil,
and your lips from speaking deceit.
Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.

Prayer of response

Send your holy angels to watch over us, O God,
that on our lips will be found your truth
and in our hearts your love;
so we may ever taste your goodness in the land of the living;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

2nd Reading: John 19.31-end

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, 'None of his bones shall be broken.' And again another passage of scripture says, 'They will look on the one whom they have pierced.'

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Prayer of response

Lord Jesus,
we thank you for your great love in dying for us.
May all who have faith in you,
known or unknown to the world,
be raised to your kingdom in glory.

All **Amen.**

Hymn: Fairest Lord Jesus

Reflection

Today the lectionary of the Church of England celebrates St Scholastica.

Who? You might be wondering, like I did when I first looked at it.

She is, it turns out, the less well-known sister of St Benedict, founder of the Benedictine order of monks.

Born in Italy in around the year 480, she decided to consecrate herself to God at an early age but probably still lived at home. After Benedict established the first house of his order at Monte Cassino, Scholastica moved nearby, either joining or founding a nunnery at Plombariola under his direction. As abbess there she sought to follow Benedict's Rule and the two would meet together to praise God and discuss spiritual matters.

A story about these two states that, on one occasion when they were meeting, they spent so long praising God and talking about spiritual things that it became late and night had fallen. Scholastica asked her brother to stay and continue talking until morning but Benedict refused because it would break his own Rule. At this Scholastica bowed her head in prayer, and when she looked up again such a fierce storm broke out that Benedict couldn't leave the house. He complained about her actions, but she replied that as he wouldn't agree to her request she'd turned to God, who had answered her because he was more generous than him. So, Benedict had to stay, and they talked through the night of spiritual things. Soon afterwards Scholastica died. Benedict had a vision of her soul rising up to heaven in the form of a white dove. He had her body buried in the tomb prepared for himself, meaning that the two could share a common resting place, being together in death as they had been in life.

Scholastica was outstanding for her simplicity and faith. She spoke to God directly, in reverent familiarity, without complex or elaborate ritual. As an abbess, Scholastica instilled in her sisters the necessity of living in accordance with the great Benedictine aim: "That in all things God may be glorified." The Benedictine sisterhoods flourished under Scholastica and through the years to the present day. She demonstrated great faith and felt that it was more important to tend the needs of others than to follow a rule rigidly. St. Gregory the Great said of St. Scholastica, "She could do more because she loved more."

Both Scholastica and Benedict gave themselves totally to God and gave top priority to deepening their friendship with him through prayer. They sacrificed some of the opportunities they would have had to be together as brother and sister in order better to fulfil their vocation to the religious life. In coming closer to Christ, however, they found they were also closer to each other and were able to grow in love and faith for both God and others. In joining a religious community, they did not forget or forsake their family but rather found more brothers and sisters.

While most of us are not called to a religious life as a nun or monk, we are all called to put God first, and in drawing closer to him we also can find ourselves drawing closer to others. In doing so we too may find ourselves able to do more because we love more.

Intercessions

That the Church of Christ
may be a door of hope in the midst of a troubled world
and a voice that sings of love's glorious triumph,
even in the midst of lamentations and cries of distress,
let us pray to the Lord.

All Lord, hear our prayer.

That through God's work in all the earth,
the hearts of world leaders may be softened
by the tears of a great multitude,
to seek the things that make for peace, and turn from war,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, hear our prayer.**

That all who are afflicted in body, mind, or spirit,
may know Christ with them in their suffering,
and be assured of his love for them,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, hear our prayer.**

That all God's people
may, like Saint Scholastica, be bold in prayer,
and confident in the triumph of love,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, hear our prayer.**

That, following the example of Scholastica and all the saints,
we may harmonize our minds with our voices,
and stand today with holy awe
in the sight of the Divine Majesty,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, hear our prayer.**

That the Lord may bring us to his heavenly city,
to the joyful gathering of thousands of angels,
to the assembly of his firstborn,
to the spirits of good people made perfect,
to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant,
and to the sprinkled blood that promises peace,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one,
let us pray as our Saviour taught us

All **Our Father, who art in heaven...**

Hymn: All creatures of our God and King

Closing prayers

The God of all grace,
who called us to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus,
establish, strengthen and settle us in the faith;
and the blessing of God almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us all, now and always.

All **Amen.**

All Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.