**Morning Praise @ Home 5 March 2023**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Readings Genesis 12: 1 – 4a John 3: 1 – 17

**Reflection from Ruth**

Our reading from John’s gospel is the only place in the New Testament where the bronze serpent is referred to. Here it points clearly to the death of Jesus. Moses put the serpent on a pole, and lifted it up so the people could see it; even so, the son of man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. Humankind as a whole has been smitten with a deadly disease. The only cure is to look at the son of man dying on the cross, and find life through believing in him. This is very deep and mysterious, but we must ask: how can the crucifixion of Jesus be like putting the snake on a pole? Wasn’t the snake the problem, not the solution? Surely John isn’t suggesting that Jesus was like the poisonous snakes that had been attacking the people? No, he isn’t. What he is saying, and will continue to say in several ways right up to his account of the crucifixion, was that evil that was and is in the world was somehow allowed to take its full force out on Jesus. When we look at Jesus hanging on the cross, we are seeing the result of the evil in which we are all stuck.
And we are seeing what God has done about it.

We are seeing, in particular, what God’s own love looks like. John refers us back to 1:18, and behind that to 1:1–2, in order to say: when Jesus died on the cross, that was the full and dramatic display of God’s own love. It wasn’t a messy accident; it wasn’t God letting the worst happen to someone else. The cross is at the heart of John’s amazing new picture of who God is. He is now to be known as the God who is both father and son, and the son is revealed, ‘lifted up’, when he dies under the weight of the world’s evil. The cross is the ultimate ladder set up between heaven and earth. But evil isn’t then healed, as it were, automatically. Precisely because evil lurks deep within each of us, for healing to take place we must ourselves be involved in the process. This doesn’t mean that we just have to try a lot harder to be good. You might as well try to teach a snake to sing. All we can do, just as it was all the Israelites could do, is to look and trust: to look at Jesus, to see in him the full display of God’s saving love, and to trust in him. Here there opens up the great divide, which John describes in terms of darkness and light. Believing in Jesus means coming to the light, the light of God’s new creation. Not believing means remaining in the darkness.
But the point of the whole story is that we don’t have to be condemned. We don’t have to let the snake kill us. God’s action in the crucifixion of Jesus has planted a sign in the middle of history. And the sign says: believe, and live.

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Tony**

Lord, we pray for your church during this season of Lent. We pray that all of us who believe in you will be strengthened to remain faithful to our calling; to work for understanding and unity where we have created divisions and to show your love and compassion to each other and to all your children.

Lord, we pray for the countless numbers of your children who suffer in this world because of violence, oppression and injustice. We pray for all who suffer because of flood or drought, lack of food, clean water or medical help and supplies. We pray for ourselves that we may learn to see more clearly the needs of your children and to respond to those needs for they are our brothers and sisters.

Lord, we all know what it is like to be gripped with fear, perhaps not just for a moment of time, but for weeks on end. Thank you for strengthening our faith, and the faith of the church. Thank you for sending Jesus to bring us to yourself. Thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to dwell with us and in us. Thank you that not a sparrow falls to the ground without you knowing it. Thank you for the comfort of your presence.

Lord, we pray for our own communities and churches. Today we particularly pray for the agricultural and horticultural work going on across our parishes. John longs for us to connect with more of them through the year. We thank you for our families and friends and pray especially for those in particular need today. We pray that your peace and love will surround them bringing them comfort and strength.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***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 today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**