

# The Christian Community

Movement for Religious Renewal

Hollywood Congregation

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## Newsletter for the week of Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July.

Dear friends,

As we are going into the summer it looks like the regulations that have been in place over the past year are again about to change.

This is what I have been able to gather from the news:

*“Although Prime Minister Boris Johnson plans to end mandatory use of face coverings in England from 19 July, that won’t apply in Northern Ireland.*

*Ministers have discussed the issue in recent days but they are moving more cautiously with lifting that rule.*

*From 26 July, face coverings will no longer be compulsory in places of worship, subject to approval on 22 July.*

*Deputy First Minister Michelle O’Neill said that was because social distancing was more easily managed in those settings”.*

But it also looks like the 1.5 – 2 m rule for social distancing in indoor spaces is also going to be reduced to 1 m.

For the moment we will still have to continue in Holywood as we have been doing, with a limited number of 12-14 on the Sundays and wearing face coverings when keeping distance isn’t possible.

But we are now allowed to share out communion again, I read on the NI direct website:

*“There should only be a closer distance when absolutely essential to enable a faith practice to be carried out (for example communion). “*

So for the moment we will try to steer our course in such a way that we can do our work whilst keeping within the law, but I am increasingly hopeful that in the not too distant future we will again be able to live our life as a congregation without any restrictions and that it will be left to our individual responsibility to learn to live with the virus.

Ben van Lieshout

### Hollywood

*For Sunday services, please ring (02890424254), text (07974960570) or email ([benvl@onetel.com](mailto:benvl@onetel.com)) to book a place as we can only seat 12-14 people.*

**St Johns** Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> July      The Act of Consecration of Man      10.00

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July**      The Act of Consecration of Man      10.00  
Followed by talk and conversation:  
Transubstantiation (4)

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> July      The Act of Consecration of Man      10.00

### Glencraig

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> July      The Act of Consecration of Man      9.30  
(Last one before the summer)

### Mourne Grange

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> July      The Act of Consecration of Man      10.15

## The gospel for Sunday 18 July is John 1:19-34

This is John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

Freely and openly, he confessed. He did not deny but confessed, "I am not the Christ, the Messiah."

Then they asked him, "Who are you then? Are you Elijah?"

And he said, "No, I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No."

Then they said, "Who are you?"



What answer are we to give to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"

He said in the words of the prophet Isaiah, "I am the voice of one crying in the loneliness: Prepare the way so that the Lord may enter into your inmost self."

And those sent by the Pharisees asked him, "Why do you baptize if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"

John answered them, "I baptize with water.

But someone is standing in your midst whom you do not know, who comes after me although he was before me. I am not worthy even to untie the strap of his sandals."

This took place in Bethany near the mouth of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The next day John sees Jesus coming to him and says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes upon himself the burden of the sin of the world.

He it is of whom I said: 'After me comes one greater than I for he existed long before me.

Even I did not know him; but for this, I have come, and have baptized with water so that human souls in Israel might become able to experience the revelation of his being."

And John testified: "I saw how the Spirit descended upon him like a dove from the heavens and remained united with him.

I did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend so that it remains united with him, he it is who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I saw this, and so I testify that this is God's Son."

## A homily on John 1:19-34

Each of us, at the core of our being, has an eternal self. Over time, this eternal Self clothes itself in different personalities, each with its own particular time and destiny. Our self-awareness is usually limited to our current incarnation. The eternal core self is hard to find, hard to recognize.



When John the Baptist is asked who he is, he answers from an awareness of his temporal self. 'I am not Elijah, not the Christ, not the prophet.'

At the same time he is clear about his personal destiny—that he came to baptize. He is also clear about Jesus' identity. He sees past Jesus' earthly personality to His eternal core as the Lamb of God, upon whom the Spirit of God descended and remained.

And John is aware that his own destiny is to serve Christ Jesus. Awareness of one's own eternal core Self is a gift of grace. Perhaps it is more important to develop an awareness of the eternal selves of others than it is to look for our own eternal core.

Perhaps it is more important for us to stand as witnesses for each other—to recognize, as John did, the eternal self of the other, to witness and accompany their destiny.

Perhaps this is part of the change of heart and mind that John advocates: that we turn away from self-involvement, toward a humble support of others.

**In The Act of Consecration at St John's tide we hear how John bears the Spirit of the Father God in the circumference of his body.**

**Nearly 60 years ago Dr Karl König wrote this poetic description of John which elaborates on this:**

Thus stood John, day by day, baptising and preaching in the desert.

The heat of the sun and the bitterness of the cold, the drought of the sand and the hardness of the rock, the idleness of the water and the emptiness of the sky- they surrounded him.

He knew nature has died, the earth is dead, and mankind is deserted of itself.

Though he knew: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare ye the way for the Lord!"

Thus he stood: mighty to behold, with strong shoulder, long and falling hair.

Terrifying hands, heavy steps, his voice was like storm, his eyes shone like the sun and the moon, his face carried the light of day and the darkness of the night, his jaws were as of rocks and his knees like mountains, in his hair that grew like reeds and grass sprouted flowers and blossoms.

Birds nested in the hollows of his shoulders and his skin was wrinkled like the bark of the cedars which stood on the Lebanon.

When he walked over the earth then the deep grounds thundered, when he spoke his words, lightning flashed past him.

His garment was like the clouds and when he preached, the rain streamed and hail poured down from it.

Dewdrops hung at the tips of each of his fingers and streams of life ran wherever he laid his hands.

The red of the dawn was around him when he smiled and the glow of the dusk when he was filled with sorrow.

If he stepped into the water, the fishes would swim towards him.

The lions laid themselves around him in the evening when he slept and the eagles circled about his sleep.

The world was dead.

In him though, Nature awakened to life;

It shone and sounded in him!

Sprouted and grew in him!

Had its day and its night in him!

In him Nature had become man.

He was the wind and the cloud,

the tree and the grass,

light and darkness,

colour and sound,

future and past.

The world was dead but he was living;

But he lived in waiting, in sacrificing, in believing

Until the one came to whom he could say:

Behold the Lamb of God

Which taketh away

The sins of the world.

Karl König, 1962