

The Christian Community

Movement for Religious Renewal

Hollywood Congregation

Rev Ben van Lieshout
3 Stewarts Place
Holywood, Co Down
BT18 9DX
90424254
07974960570
benvl@onetel.com

Newsletter for the week of Sunday 7th March.

Dear friends,

This Sunday is the first Sunday of Passiontide, the four weeks of preparation that are there to help us prepare for Easter.

The altar is draped in black and this darkness brings to mind the suffering and pain which Christ went through 2000 years ago in order to help us move forward.

But the black of the altar also reminds us that Christ is present with us here and now, that He is with us in every moment of darkness, whenever we experience suffering, pain or death.

Through His passion and death and His overcoming of death He has united himself fully with humanity, not just with all that is beautiful and good and light in our lives but especially also with everything in us that is dark and difficult and painful.

It was exactly a year ago, during Passiontide that the first lockdown began in the hope that it would stop the spread of Covid 19.

None of us could have imagined then that a year later we would still be in the middle of yet another lockdown.

It has been a year of suffering for everyone, for children struggling with learning at home without their teachers or their friends and for parents trying to cope with working from home and home-schooling.

It has been hard for all the many people who lost their job and their livelihood.

It has been extremely difficult for those who struggle with loneliness and illness and for all those who suffered and died without the support of their loved ones at their side.

I can remember in the early days of the lockdown last year how we tried to look for the positive in what was happening, when we saw how nature bounced back when the roads and the skies were suddenly empty and how we became much more aware of the importance of real human contact, of how much we actually depend on each other. And we came to realise the importance of spiritual nourishment and healing strength. There are now real signs of hope that we are approaching the end of this crisis.

But we mustn't forget what we have learned and experienced through all this suffering.

Passiontide is there to prepare us so that in time to come we can experience the fullness of the joy of Easter.

Ben van Lieshout

Hollywood

For Sunday services, please ring (02890424254), text (07974960570) or email (benvl@onetel.com) to book a place as we can only seat 11-13 people.

Thursday 4th March The Act of Consecration of Man 10.00

Passiontide

Sunday 7th March The Act of Consecration of Man 10.00
Followed by the next of a series of short talks on
The Act of Consecration of Man as a path;
" The Passiontide epistle"

Thursday 11th March The Act of Consecration of Man 10.00

Mourne Grange (in Dawn Hall !)

Saturday 6th March The Act of Consecration of Man 10.15

The gospel for the 1st Sunday of Passiontide, 7 March is Luke 11: 29 – 35



And as the crowds increased, Jesus began to speak. “The men of this generation are strangers to their true being. They look for signs and outer proofs of the spirit, but none other will be given to them but the sign of Jonah. For just as once Jonah shared the experience of the spirit with the inhabitants of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man share the experience of the spirit with this present generation. The Queen of the South will rise in the time of great crisis and decision against the men of this present generation and judge them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. But know this: here is more than Solomon.

The inhabitants of Nineveh will rise up in the days of crisis and decision against the men of this present generation and will pronounce judgment over them.

For they changed their ways after the proclamation of Jonah.

But know this; here is more than Jonah.

No one lights a light and then puts it in a hidden place or under a vessel, but rather sets it on a lamp stand, so that all may see the light shining.

The light of your body is your eye. When your eye looks at the world clearly and impartially, the processes of your whole body will be inwardly filled with light.

If however the eye’s desire sees the world separated from the spirit, darkness will pour itself into you.

Protect yourself that the light does not become darkness in you.

If your body is now filled with light, so that it no longer takes part in darkness, everything will be completely illuminated, so that, with lightning brightness, the light irradiates you completely from within.

A homily on Luke 11: 29 - 35

In last week's Gospel reading, we beheld the light form of the transfigured Christ Jesus, shining on the mountain like the sun. The light that shines from him is the revelation of the Father's love. In today's reading the life of the light continues its progress; for the light of the Father's love wants to work from within each of us.

Christ chides the people of this generation for not actively seeking the light of wisdom; he chides us for not doing what John the Baptist had encouraged us to do: to change our way of thinking and perceiving.

The Father kindled the light of Christ in the man Jesus, so that all could see the light of love and take it into themselves. The Father would like the same thing to happen within us: that we would take in the light of Christ; that we would look out into the world with the eyes of a clear, impartial, but warm love. The Father would like us to take in with our eyes the being who is the Light of the World, so that our eyes can in turn radiate and shine the brightness of objective love back out into the world.

As the poet Hafiz says:



God
pours light
into every cup,
quenching darkness.

....God pours light
and the trees lift their limbs
without worry of redemption,
every blossom a chalice.

....as light
pours like rain
into every empty cup
set adrift on the Infinite Ocean.

A prayer for Passiontide by Adam Bittleston

Blind is the soul
Imprisoned deep
In weary flesh.

And spirit-will
Is wrenched away
From living good.

But we may tread
The road the Christ
Did follow then;

When all the wrong,
And all the pain
Were gathered up

That He, the lamb,
Might bear for man
The bitter load,

And meet with man
The prince of hell
In the soul's night.