

ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM
22nd May 2022: Sixth Sunday of Easter

Hazel writes:

There has been and will be a lot happening in our church community over the next few weeks and much to celebrate:

- This week Joyce Town had her 103rd birthday. Here she is enjoying the thought of cake!
- Denise Joy will be baptised at St Mary's today: the beginning of a new life for her.
- We are hosting the Deanery Ascension Day service at St Mary's on Thursday 26th at 7.30pm – great to worship with other churches.
- Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations are happening at both of our church buildings – hopefully outside in glorious sunshine!



This pew sheet will cover our services for three weeks, as some of our ministry team are away during the period.

Today, we have Holy Communion services at 8am and 10.45am in St Francis' Church and a Holy Communion service with a Baptism at 9.15am in St Mary's Church.

Hymns at 9.15 a.m. in St. Mary's – Morning has broken – Breathe on me breath of God – Love is his word – Such love – When peace like a river (It is well Lord)

Hymns at 10.45 a.m. in St. Francis' – Love is his word – Breathe on me breath of God – There is a redeemer - Peace, perfect peace – O Jesus I have promised.

Thursday 26th May - Ascension Day – Deanery Service at St. Mary's 7.30 p.m.

Hymns - Hail the day that sees Him rise – My Jesus, my Saviour - Alleluia sing to Jesus – Christ Triumphant.

We will be hosting other churches from the Deanery.

Next **Sunday 29th May**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am and 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

Hymns at 9.15 a.m. in St. Mary's – Christ Triumphant – All heaven declares – Rejoice! The Lord is King – Gifts of bread and wine – Rejoice! Rejoice! Christ is in you.

Hymns at 10.45 a.m. in St. Francis' – Crown Him with many crowns – All heaven declares – All I once held dear – My Jesus, my Saviour – Bind us together Lord.

On **Sunday 5th June**, we will have a Holy Communion Service at 8am in St Francis' Church and a joint Holy Communion service at 10am in St Mary's Church. There will also be a Churches Together Service at 6pm outside St Francis' Church.

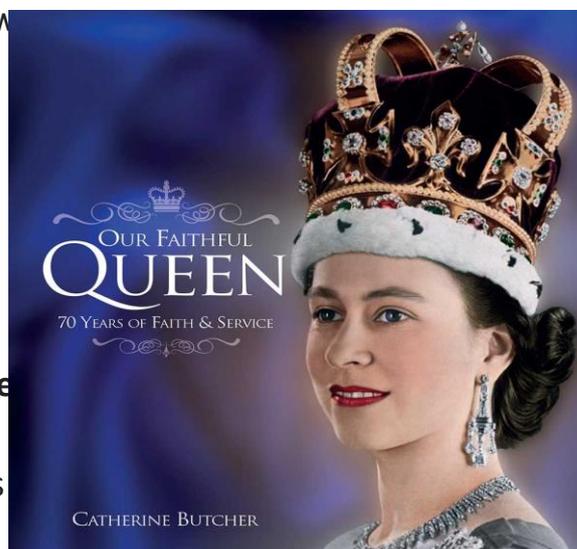
Hymns at 10 a.m. in St. Mary's – All people that on earth do dwell – Spirit of the living God – Guide me, O thou great Redeemer – Jubilate, everybody – You shall go out with joy.

On **Sunday 12th June**, we will have a Holy Communion service at 8am in St Francis' Church and non-Eucharistic services for Trinity Sunday at 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis'.

Morning Prayer is held each week in St Francis' Church on Wednesday morning at 9.30am, followed by the church being **open for private prayer** from 10.30-11.30am. It is also held at St Mary's Church on Thursday morning at 9am. There will be **no** morning prayer on either Wednesday 1st or Thursday 2nd June.

Resources and updates for the weeks ahead – This week our services will be livestreamed on YouTube from St Mary's at 9.15am and from St Francis' at 10.45am on Sunday. All other files for this week have been combined and posted as a pew sheet which has been sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line. In future weeks, there will always be a service livestreamed on YouTube from St Mary's (except where there is a joint service in St Francis') and, in some cases, there will also be a livestream from St Francis' Church.

Copies of this book, **Our Faithful Queen**, are now available for members of our congregations in the churches – for yourself, or as a gift to someone else. Please give a donation for your copies and any excess will be given to the Bromley Borough Foodbank.



Over the bank holiday weekend both our churches are hosting a **Queen's Platinum Jubilee event**:

- On Friday 3rd June, The Avenue Street Party is happening outside the church. Please bring your own picnic lunch (or buy from the street vendors) and meet some of our neighbours. There will be an acapella group singing in the church at around 2.30pm and lots of games for children.
- On Sunday 5th June, St Francis have an open-air event from 3pm, featuring The Whiskey Sours, with a bar and refreshments available in the hall. If you can bake cakes, biscuits and any other lite snacks for this event, they will be gratefully received.

Churches Together in West Wickham have a **Pentecost Service** following the St Francis' Queen's Jubilee event on Sunday 5th June at 6.15pm. Come and sing some traditional 'Songs of Praise'. A short AGM for CTWW will follow the service.

On Saturday 11th June there will be a **Deanery Pilgrimage**, walking between the ten churches in Croydon Addington Deanery. Please feel free to join anywhere on the route at the times set out below - we will stop for at least 10 minutes in each church, with prayers on the way. There will be time to share in communion and to eat your own picnic lunch at St Francis', West Wickham. Estimated timings for the day are as follows:

- 8am – 8.30am Breakfast available at St Mary the Blessed Virgin, Addington
 - 9.35am Arrive at St John's Shirley
 - 10.30am Arrive at St George's Shirley
 - 11.20am Arrive at All Saints Spring Park
 - 12.30pm Arrive at St Mary of Nazareth, West Wickham
 - 1pm Arrive at St Francis' West Wickham
 - 2.35pm Arrive at St John's West Wickham
 - 4pm Arrive at St Edward's New Addington
 - 5.40pm Arrive at St John the Divine, Selsdon
 - 6.25 pm Arrive at St Francis' Monks Hill
 - 7.15pm Arrive at St Mary the Blessed Virgin, Addington for well-earned refreshments.
- If you want any more information, do ask Hazel. Bring a picnic lunch and don't forget to have plenty of water!

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require cooking sauces, tinned cold meat, squash, coffee, surface spray cleaner, toothpaste and washing up liquid. They are well stocked with pasta, cereal, tea and biscuits. Please do not bring any fresh or frozen food, or baby milk as the foodbank cannot pass this on. You can also donate financially here <https://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money>. Thank you for your continuing support.

St Mary's have a **defibrillator** in the church hall, and we recently had a brief session with Carly from Carly Heart Trust on how easy it is to use and the benefits of having one of these machines available. It was also clear how important it is for CPR to be done as soon as possible whenever someone collapses, so here is a link to a St John Ambulance YouTube video which we recommend everyone watches: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_QPCauSmvc.

There is an event in late June when different **environmental groups** in the West Wickham area will be joining together to share what each of them are doing to help nature.

Churches Together will be hosting a stand at the event and if you would like to contribute to this with information on what is happening at either (or both) St Francis' and St Mary's, please contact David Pickering - david.pickering@urcsouthern.org.uk.

In May I am aiming to **walk 300,000 steps for Christian Aid**. Christian Aid week is from 15-21 May and the focus this year is on Zimbabwe which has been hit by rising food prices. Christian Aid supplies water taps, teaches people to grow food, and provides seeds that thrive in drought. This way dry, dusty land can be turned into a garden of hope. Step by step, we can change lives. Here is a link to my fundraising page: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hazel-o-sullivan3>, or you can leave donations in either of the churches. Hazel

If anyone would like a pedestal at either church in memory of a loved one or to commemorate a special anniversary etc., please contact Merri Womack (8777 8772) for St Mary's (or there is a list to sign in the vestibule at St. Mary's) or Nicky Nightingale (nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk or 8916 9855) for St Francis'.

This Sunday the pedestal at St. Mary's has been donated and arranged by Merri for John's birthday.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl berylbolton@hotmail.com and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com or Gifty office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk.

Collect

Risen Christ, by the lakeside you renewed your call to your disciples: help your Church to obey your command and draw the nations to the fire of your love, to the glory of God the Father.

First Reading:**Acts 16: 9-15**

⁹ During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' ¹⁰ When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them. ¹¹ We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. ¹³ On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer;

and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.' And she prevailed upon us.

Second Reading**John 14: 23-29**

Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me. ²⁵ 'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit,

whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. ²⁸ You heard me say to you, "I am going away, and I am coming to you." If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

Post Communion Prayer

God our Father, whose Son Jesus Christ gives the water of eternal life: may we thirst for you, the spring of life and source of goodness, through him who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

Collect

Risen Christ, you have raised our human nature to the throne of heaven: help us to seek and serve you, that we may join you at the Father's side, where you reign with the Spirit in glory, now and for ever.

First Reading: Acts 1: 1-11

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning² until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.³ After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.⁴ While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. 'This', he said, 'is what you have heard from me;⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore

the kingdom to Israel?'⁷ He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority.'⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'⁹ When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.¹⁰ While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them.¹¹ They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'

Second Reading: Luke 24: 44-53

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.'⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,⁴⁶ and he said to them, 'Thus it is written,

that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.⁴⁹ And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'⁵⁰ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them.⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.⁵² And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy;⁵³ and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Post Communion Prayer

God our Father, you have raised our humanity in Christ and have fed us with the bread of heaven: mercifully grant that, nourished with such spiritual blessings, we may set our hearts in the heavenly places; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Collect

Risen, ascended Lord, as we rejoice at your triumph, fill your Church on earth with power and compassion, that all who are estranged by sin may find forgiveness and know your peace, to the glory of God the Father.

First Reading:

Acts 16: 25-34

.²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul shouted in a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.' ²⁹ The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down

trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them outside and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' ³¹ They answered, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' ³² They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. ³⁴ He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

Second Reading:

John 17: 20- 26

²⁰ 'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given them, so

that they may be one, as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ 'Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.'

Post Communion Prayer

Eternal God, giver of love and power, your Son Jesus Christ has sent us into all the world to preach the gospel of his kingdom: confirm us in this mission, and help us to live the good news we proclaim; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Collect

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, ignite in us your holy fire; strengthen your children with the gift of faith, revive your Church with the breath of love, and renew the face of the earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading:**Acts 2: 1-21**

2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. **2** And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.

4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. **5** Now there were

devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. **6** And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. **7** Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?' **8** And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?

9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, **11** Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' **12** All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' **13** But others

sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. **15** Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. **16** No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

17 "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams.

18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

19 And I will show portents in the heaven

above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Second Reading:

John 14: 8-17

⁸ Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' ⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but

the Father who dwells in me does his works.

¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. ¹⁵ 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it

neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

Post Communion Prayer

Faithful God, who fulfilled the promises of Easter by sending us your Holy Spirit and opening to every race and nation the way of life eternal: open our lips by your Spirit, that every tongue may tell of your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

REFLECTION – Richard Ford

Sermon – Acts 16.9-15; John 14. 23-29

So what had been going on before Paul had his vision of a man of Macedonia calling him to go to the aid of the Macedonians?

Paul and Silas had been traveling through modern day Syria and eastern Turkey, strengthening and encouraging the churches that he had planted in those areas. They had next planned to go west into what was then called Asia, but had been prevented from doing so by the Holy Spirit, so instead they prepared to go into Bithynia, on the southern coast of the Black Sea. However, the Holy Spirit once again prevented them.

How the Holy Spirit prevented them is not exactly clear. It may have been through the sickness of one or more of their party; it may have been through one of the group giving a word of prophecy; it may have been an insistent feeling, a growing, internal conviction, which I think is how most of us experience the Holy Spirit communicating with us – that nagging, inescapable feeling that we should or should not be doing something.

Anyway, Paul and Silas then headed for Troas, and that was where Paul had his vision of a man begging them to go to Macedonia. And that was significant, because Macedonia was in what is now known as Greece, and so marked the beginning of the Gospel being preached in Europe: new territory in which to preach the good news of what God has done for us in Jesus was being opened up and, of course, it eventually led to our country embracing Christianity.

And something else significant is happening in the way in which Luke, the author of Acts, is writing his account of Paul's missionary journey. Verse 11 reads, "From Troas **we** put out to sea..." The narrator has moved from writing in the third person to writing in the first person. It seems highly likely that Luke himself has joined Paul's party in Troas and, if so, then what we now have is something very precious indeed – an eyewitness account of what is going on.

Their first destination after arriving in Macedonia is Philippi, a Roman colony. Because there are so few Jews there, there is no synagogue, so Paul has to abandon his usual approach to evangelism, which is to begin preaching in the local synagogue.

Instead, he makes his way to the river, knowing that it was customary for places of prayer to be situated outdoors near running water. And it's here that he meets Lydia. Although this is the only chapter in which she appears in the

New Testament, we learn quite a lot about her. She is described as “a worshipper of God.” In other words, she is not a Jew. Nor is she a Greek convert to Judaism, but she does recognise the Jewish God as the true God and subscribes to the moral teaching of Scripture. We’re told that she comes from Thyatira, a Greek town famous for producing dyed cloth. We’re also told that she is a dealer in purple cloth, and in those days such cloth was at the top end of the market. In other words, she is businesswoman of some means.

And when she hears what Paul has to say, the Lord opens her heart to respond to Paul’s message. Note that, it isn’t Paul’s words alone that bring her to faith, it’s Jesus working through Paul that convinces her of the truth of the Gospel. And that’s generally the way in which God still works today – through his followers. If God is going to bring people to faith in Jesus, then he needs us, like Paul, to be ready to share our faith with others.

Lydia’s response to Paul’s words is first to seek baptism and then to offer hospitality to Paul and his companions.

Not infrequently as we read the gospels, we may get the impression that it’s wrong to be wealthy. Think, for example, of Jesus telling the rich young man to sell all that he has and give it to the poor (Matthew 19.21), or his parable of the successful farmer who built more and bigger barns to hold his crops so that he could put his feet up, and eat, drink and make merry, but who died before he could enjoy his wealth (Luke 12. 16-21), or the parable about the rich man who sat at his table ignoring the poor man at his gate and who ended up in hell whilst the poor man found himself in heaven (Luke 16. 19-21).

But in this episode, we see a different approach to wealth. Lydia has done well for herself and has a big house, so when the opportunity presents itself, she puts that house at the disposal of God, by offering Paul and his friends the hospitality of staying with her. And we’re told later in the chapter that when Paul and Silas are released from prison, having been incarcerated following a false accusation of “advocating customs unlawful for Romans to accept or practice,” when they are released, they go to Lydia’s house, where we are told they meet with the brothers and encourage them, so it seems from this that her house has become the meeting place of the newly formed church in Philippi.

So, it’s not wrong to be wealthy; it’s what you do with the wealth that is important. Keeping it for yourself is wrong but using it in God’s service is what He expects. So, we’re also told in the gospels that there was a group of

wealthy women who used to go around with the disciples and used their wealth to meet the disciples' needs.

If I've mentioned this before, I apologise. When my daughter left university and started working for a small missionary charity in Cambridge, one that was involved in outreach to foreign students, she found lodgings with a lovely Christian couple. Judith, the wife, told us that when they had moved into their large house in a pleasant part of the city, she had offered the house to God, but had asked that she could keep the kitchen for herself. However, like Lydia, she had felt called to provide hospitality for Christian workers, and that had ultimately involved giving them free range of her kitchen.

And you don't have to be wealthy to provide hospitality. Mary and Martha, who opened their house to Jesus and his disciples, lived in Bethany, which can be translated as "the House of the Poor."

And one of positive things to come out of the Russian invasion of Ukraine has been the way in which people in this county have been prepared to open up their homes to those fleeing the conflict.

But the Bible doesn't restrict the offering of hospitality simply to the individual or those in our immediate neighbourhood. Frequently, and especially in the Old Testament, we find God requiring hospitality of the nation as a whole. So in Deuteronomy, we find God telling the people, through Moses, that they are "not to withhold the wages of poor and needy labourers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of the towns." And a little further on the commandment is that they "should not deprive an alien ... of justice," and when they reap their harvest in their field and forget a sheaf in the field, they are not to go back and get it; it shall be left for the alien." (Deut. 24. 5ff). And we find something similar in the psalms, where we're told "the Lord watches over the stranger in the land."

So why this emphasis on hospitality to the stranger? The answer is also to be found in Deuteronomy, where the Israelites are told: "Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this."

This emphasis in the Bible on hospitality is why our Archbishop and a number of other bishops and church leaders have spoken out so strongly against the Government's proposal to send what it calls illegal immigrants to Rwanda. An example of what this means in practice came to light this week when it was revealed that among the first group of asylum seekers to be identified for

sending to Rwanda was a 26 year old man who fled a massacre in his village in Sudan and had then taken three years and journeyed more than 5000 miles, including crossing the English Channel in a kayak, because he couldn't afford to pay smugglers for passage in a larger, sturdier vessel, to reach this country. That's real desperation.

And it's worth remembering that most of us here today will have come in with the Romans, or the Angles, Saxons or Jutes, or the Vikings or the Huguenots, or the Jews or via the Windrush. So a hospitable reception of other immigrants is called for.

And it's why it is so strange that our Home Secretary is so hostile to other immigrants, given that she herself was born to Gujarati parents who fled to London from Uganda in the 1960s. I wonder what their fate would have been today.

Hospitality also plays a part in our Gospel reading, but this time it's us offering hospitality to God the Father and his Son, for Jesus says to his followers:

"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him (or her)."

And not only will they live with us, they will bring with them that special peace which only Jesus can bring into our lives – the peace that comes from knowing that we are accepted by God and a member of his Kingdom, and all that flows from that. In the secular world, peace rarely means more than an absence of conflict. But Jesus' peace refers to what he achieved on the cross, when he took on the forces of evil and death and overcame them. For His resurrection shows that death has been defeated and the price of our sin, or the evil of humankind, paid, so that we are reconciled to God.

And in the fullness of time we will be invited to share God's hospitality in the Kingdom of Heaven.

So, then, three things to remember: we are called to be hospitable to those in need; we are called to be hospitable to God, to invite him into our lives; and our hospitality will be reciprocated by God when he, in turn, invites us to join him in his heavenly kingdom. Something to look forward to. Amen

Prayer Pointers

Our gospel reading for 22nd May Jesus says “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you”. Pray that Jesus, bringer of peace in the midst of the storm, will be a strong beacon we can cling to, when we are being buffeted about by life. Bring us peace, Lord.

Pray for our two congregations of St Mary’s and St Francis. Pray that we may rejoice in what we have in common. Pray that we may be open to change and new possibilities for us in worship and working in our community.

We pray for all hospitals, workplaces, schools and homes; for those under huge pressures; for those who have no job security; for those who are bullied; for those who suffer behind closed doors.

Pray for all places where lives have been lost to, and are threatened by, the brutality of prejudice. We pray for Ukraine and all countries being bombed and destroyed because of the ideology of other powers and leaders; for all prisoners and casualties of war.

Hold before God all those we know who are sick, especially those suffering from cancer and undergoing treatment. In our congregations we pray for those struggling with ill health – especially Julie Bailey, Vicky Pearce, Mike East and Pat Allegacone.

Offer our own personal prayers and thanksgivings. We entrust to God all those things that worry us; those situations we feel helpless in; those decisions that burden us; those losses that overwhelm us.

Sri Lanka is in turmoil - close to bankruptcy, with shortages of essential food and fuel, amid turbulent protests:

Lord, we lift to you the people of Sri Lanka, asking for your mercy and your reconciliation. Guide their leaders into wisdom, as they seek a solution to deep-rooted problems; Protect their poorest people, so that those who face hunger may find help; Heal their divided nation, so that those who have been unjustly treated will thrive. And so may this beautiful island become once more a place of joy and tolerance, where all may worship in reverence and peace. Amen. *(Peter Graystone – Diocese of Southwark)*