

Service for Week 29th June -5th July

2026 By Chaplain Andy

Our Opening Prayer.

Loving God, we do believe. We believe that in Jesus you have shown the way, the truth and the life. Yet alongside our faith there is also doubt. We do not have all the answers, and sometimes seem only to have questions. Yet we believe that those questions, honestly asked, can lead us to a deeper understanding of who you are and your purpose for each of us. So today we offer you not just our faith, but also our doubt, praying you will use both to lead us closer to you.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven.....

Amen

Bible Reading Matthew 11:16-19,25-30

"To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: " 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." ' But wisdom is proved right by her actions."

From verse 25

At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things

from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

We have recently been away on holiday to Menorca the Spanish island in the mediterranean. There they were getting ready for a major religious festival of 'Saint Joan' which we discovered is a festival dedicated to John the Baptist. This Festival of Saint Joan is held on June 23rd and 24th. Starting back in the 14th century, it is famous for the black Menorcan horses which are ridden through the crowded streets before various historic social rituals are enacted. The festival is to celebrate and give thanks for the prophet, John the Baptist who heralded the start of Jesus's mission.

The elaborate preparations for this Minorcan religious festival made me

think how we forget how important John the Baptist was in recognizing and acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God and paving the way for him. In our bible text, Jesus, after instructing his twelve disciples to spread the good news about the love of God, sets out to start his mission of preaching and healing around the towns and villages. He then talks about John the Baptist who is in prison and we get the sense that Jesus is perhaps frustrated by the people's reaction and doubt.

Jesus says that despite the different styles of preaching and delivering the message that he and John the Baptist adopted, still not many people became believers. Jesus compares it to children in the market place trying to get everyone's attention - 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance' and 'we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.' Then he says there were those people that accused John the Baptist of being a demon and tried to discredit him and some called Jesus a drunkard and a friend of sinners.

This is very much how today there are always detractors and people complaining, especially if someone or something new comes along. We get this in the newspapers and on social media. However good a thing is, there is always those who are indifferent, those who reject it and are full of hate. It is not always hatred for the actual

person or thing but a hatred of everything within the perpetrators life which may have occurred through their own circumstances, through depression or mental illness.

Jesus tells them if you want to know God and have God in your life come and listen to what I am saying. It is not difficult, even the children can understand it. If we have hatred within us, if we are burdened with past sins and wrongdoing which is on our conscience Jesus says - "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Referring to the wooden yoke which animals wore to pull loads he said 'take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'"

John the Baptist told the people there was a different way to live, to repent and find forgiveness and how Jesus had come from and of God to share his love for us all. This is what Menorca celebrated on June 23rd and what we also celebrate.

Jesus said 'I will give you rest' **Amen**

Closing prayer

Living God, I am weary and burdened, help me to open my life to you, feed me through your word, nourish me through your Spirit and nurture me through the gracious love of Christ.

Amen

Prayers inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett