



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF YORK

Archbishop Stephen spoke at a service to mark the 200th anniversary of Holy Trinity Cathedral in Port of Spain. The sermon follows in full. Please check against delivery

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit... and remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- Matthew 28. 19

A woman is slowly making her way down a street in Port of Spain on a hot, hot afternoon. It is Eastertide.

She pauses outside a Christian bookshop.

In the window is a tableau depicting the scene of the crucifixion.

There is Jesus on the cross. Some soldiers are casting lots for Jesus’s clothes. At the foot of the cross, stand Mary and the beloved disciple, John.

The crowds hiss and scoff. In the background there is a tomb hewn into the rock.

The woman stands looking at this scene for a long while. She is transfixed by it.

She then marches into the shop. It is empty. She goes straight up to the counter where a timid little man is waiting to serve her. Placing her elbows firmly on the counter, she addresses him forcefully.

‘Is that Jesus, dead in your window,’ she says to him.

‘Well, yes, yes, it is,’ says the man.

‘And that woman, standing at the foot of the cross, is that Mary the mother of Jesus?’

‘Well, yes, yes, it is,’ says the man.

‘And those soldiers, rolling their dice forward Jesus is clothes, are they the ones who nailed him to the tree?’

‘Well, yes, yes, it is,’ says the man.

‘And that tomb over yonder, is that where they buried him?’

‘Well, yes, yes, it is,’ says the man.

‘And that Jesus, him dead, him buried and him gone forever?’

‘Why, no, says the man. Haven't you heard? He rose again.’

And at this point, the woman's face breaks into a wide, enormous smile. 'Heard it' she said, 'I reckon I done heard it a thousand times; but I just glory to hear it again!'

Sisters and brothers, that is why we are here this morning. That is why we have been here for the past 200 years. This is what we are celebrating.

For 200 years this Cathedral Church of God the Holy Trinity has been telling the story of Christ.

And it is glorious. It is worth celebrating.

So, mix up the rum punch. Crack open the Carib. Put some sword fish steaks on the grill. Make the doubles into trebles. Curried crab and dumplings for everyone.

For 200 years this cathedral has served this great city, this diocese, and this nation.

For 200 years it has reached out to the people of this city with the story of Christ and the good news of God's saving love.

For 200 years it has sung God's praises day by day.

That's a lot of days... 73,500 to be precise!

73,500 mornings. 73,500 evenings.

Waking this city to the providence of God. Sending this city to its rest in the confident hope of God's protection and peace.

And I come here to join you from England, bearing greetings from the Archbishop of Canterbury, affirming your partnership with the Diocese of Chelmsford, where I used to serve, and glorying in the message of the gospel I come to share with you again and afresh.

It is 2,000 years old. It has been celebrated here for 200 years. But it is new every morning.

And I say this to you. We need to hear it again, and we need to tell it afresh because it is good news for our lives; because we are the sinners Christ came to save; and because it is the message of hope and peace, that our world so badly needs.

Facing the horrors of war, the ignominies and inequalities of poverty, the existential threat of climate crisis, we need to find a way of inhabiting this planet that cares for the earth, turns swords into ploughshares, and it is in Jesus, crucified and risen, that we find this hope.

Jesus shows us what our humanity is supposed to look like. He, and he alone, is the medicine for the elements of the world. His love breaks down barriers of separation. His teaching is the wisdom the human heart craves. Like springs of living water, breaking out of the dry, dry land, his words are life itself.

Go, tell his story. Glory to hear it, and glory to share it.

Strengthened by his word, nourished by the sacraments, heartened by our fellowship in this holy place, tell the world and all its peoples that we have a future, and we have a hope. That sin, death, darkness, and injustice do not have the last word.

And this 'go' that Jesus speaks about in today's gospel, means literally 'go!' Go and do this; make it your priority; given it your attention.

And it means 'as you go'. As you go about your daily life. In the home, in your school, at work, at play, tell of Christ's love and be a sign of that love.

As you wash the dishes, as you ride the bus, as you eat your lunch, as you dance to the beautiful music of the pans, as you sing calypso, as you tuck your children into bed, tell of Christ's love, and be a sign of that love.

Be a sign of it in the life you lead, by acts of generosity, mercy and kindness. And tell others why it is that you can be this way: because Christ is risen from the dead. Because he has overcome sin and death. Because we have this hope.

And don't be ashamed of it. It is very good news indeed. The whole world glories to hear it.

And don't think it is someone else's responsibility to share it with others. Good news is always worth sharing. And it's what we do all the time in other bits of our life.

So, if a new child is born into your family, you tell people about it.

If you see a good film, you tell people.

If your team wins the cup, you tell people.

If you eat a fantastic meal at a fantastic new restaurant, you tell people.

If you discover there's a special offer at the shop around the corner, that they have slashed the prices for one day only, you tell people.

In fact, you shout it from the rooftops. You get on the 'phone. You post it on social media. You tweet and TikTok and Facebook and zoom. You make sure people know.

So, tell the story of Christ. Live and share and glory. Tell it again and afresh.

And baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

It is into this Holy Trinity that Jesus invites us; into the very community that is the life and heart of God.

And it is to this Holy Trinity that this cathedral is dedicated.

And it is on this feast of the Holy Trinity that 200 years ago this cathedral was consecrated and dedicated.

And it is in the knowledge of the love of God that is shown us in the Holy Trinity that we discover that what's best in the world, the love we have for each other in our families and communities, our church and our nation, is itself a reflection of the life of God who is community, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

What an honour it is for me to be with you to help celebrate this today. Thank you, Bishop Claude for your invitation, and for your wise and courageous leading of this diocese and for your commitment to Christ. Thank you Dean for your leadership of this Cathedral Church.

May God bless this Cathedral Church, this diocese and this nation. May God grant us peace and help us to live in peace with each other, with the earth itself and across the world.

My wife Rebecca and I came to Trinidad and Tobago eight years ago. We had a fantastic visit. We fell in love with your beautiful country. We danced to the mellifluous sound of the pans. We swam in your beautiful sea. We met some amazing people. We saw a turtle laying her eggs on the beaches of Tobago at midnight. We celebrated family day. We even ate Iguana and dumplings, which I'm not sure we were supposed to!

I wasn't sure we would ever have the chance to visit again. But here we are - with you by the grace of God. And I come as your friend and brother in Christ, a fellow pilgrim and a sinner saved by grace, and with a simple message to share. That Christ is risen. That everything is made new. That we belong to each other through our baptism and commit ourselves to sharing this message of hope here in Trinidad and Tobago, in the United Kingdom and across the world. That God is on our side.

"Remember," says Jesus, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age."



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