

Bishop of Lichfield

I shall soon be asking – ‘**Do you believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ?**’ And it is great that you can answer ‘**Yes!**’

It is such a good time to confirm your faith having just prayed that we have: ‘**faith in him who suffered on the cross ...**’ and in a couple of weeks we are about to celebrate ‘**the triumph of his victory.**’ This is where our belief and trust are placed, in Jesus who is the living truth.

We know that we have a problem with belief and trust in our world, because of problems with **truth**. I was speaking a few days ago to a young Russian woman – living in London and recently having given birth to her first child – she told me, in tears, about her parents in Moscow, and her sister in Kharkov, Ukraine – she was desperate for news of her sister, and could not have a proper conversation with her mother who did not believe that Russian soldiers were attacking civilians in the Ukraine, and told her that her sister was ‘**making it up**’, that there was no war, it was just a ‘**liberation mission**’. The woman said to me: ‘**I can no longer talk to my parents, there is no trust and I am so sad that my son will never know his grand-parents**’. Today we pray across our country for peace in Ukraine. We know that the rebuilding of trust will be the work of a lifetime and beyond.

War is an extreme and terrible example, but we know there is a crisis of trust in our world and in our society – that is why today is such a great occasion – you are putting your trust in Jesus, and you are right to do that because there is no fake news in him. He is the one who is always true, who is **truth himself**.

**That works in three ways:**

1. **Jesus tells us the truth of who we are and what our situation is.** In our Gospel reading, the supper at Bethany, with the clouds of the crucifixion gathering – Jesus knows he will be put to death and is ‘**preparing for burial**’ – because he has spoken the truth, and shone his light on the darkness of the world. To put our trust in Jesus means to accept that, to admit our sin, our deceit, our helplessness – it means to be honest, to tell the truth as it is – we so need honesty in our world today.
2. **Jesus does not just tell us where we are and how we got here, he also points to the future, he promises hope.** There are so many false promises made today. In Ukraine there are heart-breaking scenes of civilians setting out to evacuate under safe conduct, then being shelled – what a huge breach of promise ... but we know lots of lesser betrayals in our own lives. Jesus’ promises are not like that. They are sure and certain, a hope of new life and true glory won for us by his triumph over death. At Bethany he has given a sign of that by calling Lazarus out of the tomb; so for us, belief and trust mean living by hope. In our world, so often dark and fearful, we, you, are called to live by hope and bring hope to others who need that hope.
3. **And it is not just the past and the future. Jesus’ truth calls us to live the right way in the present.** We see that in the meal at Bethany too – the contrast of behaviour: Judas’ life based on falsehood and theft, full of complaint and criticism. But here too is Mary, her simple and deep act of loving service, anointing Jesus’ feet and washing them with her hair – confronted with the truth of her Lord’s great love, she responds in loving service. And we are to do the same, treating one another with care and kindness, because that is the way to live truthfully in the present.

So as we come to Confirmation, as we put our belief and trust in Jesus, three simple ways of living truthfully:

**Be honest, be hopeful, be kind, and may the Holy Spirit give you grace for all that.**

**Amen.**