

# Reflections for 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## Sunday after Ascension Day

### A heart of stone

Nowadays we use the word 'petrify' to mean 'to frighten', or 'to paralyse with fear', but the original meaning was related to the Latin word for 'stone', and so it means to turn something to stone. In some underground caves, water containing minerals can drip slowly and over a long time make stalagmites and stalactites. In the same way, if water drips onto an object, over many years the mineral deposits can build up to 'petrify' the object, and appear to turn it to stone.

There are many things in life that can, as we sometimes say, 'harden our hearts', through disappointments, failures, troubles and hurts, which make it difficult for us to take the risk of living with open hearts – open to God, open to others, and open to life. Our Old Testament reading from Ezekiel speaks of God changing our heart of stone into a 'heart of flesh' – a heart that is warm and alive. This always reminds me of a quotation from the writings of C. S. Lewis, as he reflects on the nature of love, and what it does to our hearts:

There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung, and possibly be broken.

The Christian faith is about finding the strength to love, about taking the risk of being hurt – that is to have a 'heart of flesh', a heart truly alive to God, to one another, and to life. Through the words of the prophet Ezekiel, we can hear God's call and promise to us:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Revd John Waller

A prayer from Christian Aid, to mark the end of Christian Aid Week:

God of love, melt my indifferent heart of stone,  
open my eyes to your children's suffering  
and lift my head to see your perfect love again.  
Work a miracle in my life, that through your Spirit  
and my softened heart's obedience  
I might give my very self to keep hope alive,  
and to be the change you require. Amen.

Bible readings: Ezekiel 36. 24-28; Acts 1. 15-17, 21-26; John 17. 6-19

Story: 'Down Through the Roof' (based on Luke 5. 17 – 26)