

**10.00 Mattins – 28th August 2011**  
**Trinity 10 – Year A**

Sirach 11: 19-28  
Revelation 3: 14-end

**To the angel of the church in Laodicea: I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot.** Laodicea was a very, very wealthy city, founded by Antiochus II and named after his wife Laodicea. The city was strategically located where three major highways converged, and thus it was highly commercial. It was well known for its banking industry, its manufacture of black wool and a medical school that produced eye ointment. The wealth in the city had been used to build theatres, a huge stadium, lavish public baths and fabulous shopping centres. Does this sound familiar, a bit like many typical British cities ?

So wealthy was Laodicea, that when an earthquake almost entirely destroyed it in 60 AD, its wealthy citizens refused help from Rome in rebuilding the city. If you were an estate agent at the time, it wouldn't be hard to sell Laodicea. It was a great place to live, in this land of opportunity. Again, does this sound familiar?

The church in Laodicea was most likely founded by Paul. He actually wrote a letter to them that is now lost, but is referred to in his letter to the Colossians. But it was apparent that the Christian community there had become victims of their comfortable environment. The Laodiceans were not zealous about their faith. There was no fire to their faith. They were also not feeding the needs of the people, by offering the cool springs of knowledge in the Lord Jesus. In his letter to the Romans, Paul had written: **Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.** Indeed, still a valuable lesson for us all today. Unfortunately, the Christians at Laodicea had grown to love and put their faith in the material things of world, not their creator.

Verse 15 says: **I know your works.** What a powerful and sobering truth. Jesus knows our works, both individually and as a church. Jesus knew all about the church at Laodicea, the details of which we will get to shortly. But what about us ? Does Jesus know our deeds ? This is not one of the issues I want to focus upon in this morning, but it stands as a sobering reminder for us all to examine ourselves from time-to-time. Jesus, the true and faithful Witness, He does know our works.

So what were the works of the church at Laodicea ? Jesus says: **You are neither cold nor hot. I would that you were cold or hot.** What is Jesus saying here ? We all know the answer, He's saying the Laodiceans were lukewarm about their Christian faith. So, what is lukewarmness ? According to the dictionary, it means lacking warmth of feeling or enthusiasm. To a Christian, it describes a state of indifference, complacency, or apathy. In the case of the Laodiceans, perhaps they were self-satisfied, or felt self-sufficient. In reality, they were like a chicken with its head cut off. Dead, but not knowing it yet.

How could you describe a lukewarm church today ? How about, a church that just goes through the motions. The people gather to worship, but then mindlessly go through the motions. There is no heart, no zeal, no focus in their worship. When they sing, it's just rubbish. When they pray, study, and remember our Saviour at the Lord's Table, their minds simply wander. They don't worry about spreading the gospel, visiting the sick, or caring for those in need. In other words, they don't do anything for Christ. Would that be a lukewarm church today ?

Fortunately that cannot describe St Mary's today. I don't believe that we can be called a lukewarm church. I believe that we do care for all of those in need, as well as we are able to. And not just from within our own church community. We do visit the sick and the lonely, and we do take our worship seriously. We don't differentiate between people of different races, colour, sexuality, creeds or different faiths, or even no faith at all. In fact, we try to mix with anyone, just like those with whom Jesus himself mixed. Yes, we could do more, of course we could. Remember those words from Sirach: **The blessing of the Lord is the reward of the pious, and quickly God causes his blessing to flourish.** We must ensure that we never become complacent, like the Laodiceans.

Our reading from Revelations should remind us, that though blinded by wealth, love of material things and lukewarmness, Jesus still loved the church in Laodicea, and provided an opportunity for repentance. The same is true for us today. He stands at the door and knocks. But we have to make the next move. It is our responsibility to open the door. Amen.