

Homily for the 7th Sunday of Easter

We are in a bit of in-between time in our liturgical year. Last Thursday we celebrated Jesus' return to the Father and today we await the outpouring of the Holy Spirit next Sunday at Pentecost. In this in between time, we have the beautiful prayer of Jesus to the Father praying for his disciples, and for us, as they, and we, continue his mission in the time he would no longer be physically present. He refers to the disciples as those who were given to him by the Father. Isn't that an amazing thought, that you and I are a gift of the Father to Jesus as his disciples. Let that sink in for a moment. Jesus then prays 'keep them true to your name', asking that we may remain faithful in our commitment so that we can share in the unity that Jesus and the Father enjoy. Unity in our relationship with God, unity with each other and unity with the whole of creation. We should be walking on air at this point.

However, there is the warning. There will be opposition, even hatred by those people and forces in the world that refused to accept Jesus, and who will continue to refuse to accept his followers. Those who opposed Jesus during his life time, were largely those with power, religious and political leaders'. They were determined to silence Jesus because he was putting forward a way of living which would upset their own way of life. Not much has changed! He saw how people were being crushed by the Law which was meant to set them free but which had become an intolerable burden. In a famous response to the scribe who asked him which is the greatest commandment of the Law Jesus replied, 'To love God with all our heart, mind and strength', and then he added, 'to love your neighbour as yourself.'

So love, as last week, is at the centre of our lives as his followers, a love that wants the very best for the other person, whoever that other person is. In the second reading today St John writes – no one has ever seen God but as long as we love one another God will live in us. This is a huge statement which we would do well to dwell on a little. It reminds us of a similar phrase – 'where charity and love are, there is God', which is often sung on Holy Thursday during the washing of the feet, reminding us of the great example of service that Jesus gives us.

As long as we love one another God will live in us, and God will help us to reach out in love to those whose lives are torn apart in so many different ways: by the current pandemic, the violence between Palestinians and Israelis, the unjust rule in Myanmar, the starvation in Yemen, the unscrupulous behaviour of those who use their position or their power to use or abuse others. These are but a few examples and the temptation is to look the other way, but if we go back to the gospel for today Jesus does not pray that we be taken out of the world, but that we be protected from the evil one, and consecrated in the truth. And the truth is that we can make a difference, however small, when we act out of love. In these days between the Ascension and Pentecost we pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who will lead us to the truth and help us experience the presence of God in our love for others.

Bidding Prayers for the 7th Sunday of Easter

Celebrant:

We are sent into the world to be bearers of Christ's truth. May we lift up those who suffer in these prayers we now offer.

Reader:

For the Church – that it will help all its members to live in the world in a responsible and loving way, and to be protected from evil.

Lord in your mercy

For peace in the Middle East – that the provocative annexation and possession of land and property, and the escalating violence on both sides will come to an end, so that all may live in peace based on justice.

Lord in your mercy

For all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit, especially those who are depressed, those with dementia and those close to death – that they and their families will receive the love and support they need at this time.

Lord in your mercy

For all those involved in the media – that on this world Communication Sunday they will strive to promote the truth in what they say and write.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the pandemic, for David Hilton who died last Sunday and Patricia McGreal, Thomas Robinson, Michael Leslie Woodcock, Amy Louise Woodcock, Thomas Caulfield, Mary Clifford and Albert Ford whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

All loving God, your Son, Jesus, consecrates us in truth, and teaches us to resist evil in all its forms. Help us to live simple lives fully devoted to you and grateful for all the blessings we receive. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen