

Homily for the 5th Sunday of Easter

“I tell you solemnly whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, will perform even greater works because I am going to the Father.” Whenever Jesus begins a sentence with ‘I tell you solemnly’, we know we should take him very seriously, but surely these final words of today’s gospel should come with a health warning, how can we think of performing the same works as him, let alone even greater works? The challenge is huge.

We heard of a big challenge in the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles. As the number of converts to Christianity grew and as they began to come from different religious and cultural backgrounds, problems began to arise. Some felt they were being overlooked, missing out on food distribution, being treated as somehow second class. Something had to be done and a new ministry emerged with a specific role of service to go alongside that of proclaiming the Word, not that service is not a very profound proclamation of the Word! A topical example in this country might be workers in the Care Sector who feel that their colleagues in the NHS are getting preferential treatment when it comes to the distribution of PPE. Both are doing incredibly important, indeed life saving work, and yet they have not been treated in the same way. The Government has promised to do something about this, it remains to be seen when this actually happens. What we do know is that all involved in the medical and caring professions ARE performing the same works as Jesus continuing his ministry of healing.

How can we do greater works? One way of thinking through this is by acknowledging that the opportunities open to us today are infinitely greater than those facing Jesus who was limited in terms of who he could reach. With modern means of communication we have literally become a ‘global village’ as events, both good and bad, taking place in different parts of the world, come alive in our own homes. It might be the Olympics, the World Cup Final, Wimbledon or devastating flooding, forest fires or human made catastrophes like civil war, genocide or wholesale fleeing from violence. Those who edit National News Programmes have such a weighty responsibility to give us the truth and not some spin that will make us feel more comfortable or placate unsuitable leaders.

Recently our news has been very insular, perhaps understandable given the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, but still regrettable, because we know how easy it is to forget the plight of so many in our world suffering from poverty, homelessness, violence, the abuse of power and so forth. But also not hearing about the good that is being done by individuals and groups, like Aid to the Church in Need, giving practical help to those Christians who are being persecuted today, or Medecin sans Frontieres working in some of the most war torn countries like Syria. They are doing the works of Jesus but on a greater scale than he, and if we support them by our prayers and in other ways, making their work known more widely, giving financial aid where we can, we too, at least by association, will be doing the same, and contributing to the Common Good of people who otherwise would be left to fend for themselves, which Jesus would never have done.

Bidding Prayers for the 5th Sunday of Easter

Celebrant:

In God's house there are many rooms ready to welcome those for whom they have been prepared. We trust that God hears our prayers for all people and especially for those in most need at this time.

Reader:

For the Church – that it will be a place of welcome for all and especially for those who feel excluded because of race, gender, sexual orientation or any other prejudice.

Lord in your mercy

For all who exercise leadership in our world today – that they will value the pursuit of justice and peace by upholding the human rights and dignity of all.

Lord in your mercy

For those who are seeking meaning in their lives – that they will find real hope and encouragement in Jesus the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Lord in your mercy

For ourselves – that we will be open to God's Holy Spirit and be prepared to take risks in building God's Kingdom here on earth.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the Coronavirus, Muriel Cordingly who died recently, and Frederick Isaac Cox whose anniversary occurs this week – that they and all who have 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:

Lord God, you make your people a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, calling us your own. Help us to respond to the gifts of the Holy Spirit making us a sign of your love for the whole world. Through Christ our Lord. Amen