

Homily for 7th Sunday of Easter

Let me share an experience when I was 11 years old. It was a meeting with three, as I thought then, elderly men whom I didn't know personally. One was the bishop, a second the Vicar General, the third, the Vocation's Director. The interview would determine whether I would be accepted as a church student – someone wanting to be a priest – and therefore go to seminary. (I can hear you saying what, at 11 or 12 years of age?) The bishop asked me if I prayed, and I said 'Yes'. 'Say a prayer' he said and I couldn't remember one, not even the Our Father or the Hail Mary. I was devastated, and presumed I had failed. Looking back now it was a terrible ordeal for a young boy and an abuse of power by those present.

It was my Mother who taught me to pray, just as Mary the Mother of Jesus would have taught him to pray, and in today's first reading Mary is present with the 11 apostles, with several women, and Jesus' brothers in continuous prayer awaiting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We have no idea what the content of their prayer was but we do know that when the Holy Spirit came they were ready and their lives were transformed as we will hear next Sunday when we celebrate Pentecost.

When we come to the gospel we have Jesus praying. From the other three gospels we know that prayer, that intimate communication between Jesus and his Father, was as much a part of Jesus' life as breathing. He would spend whole nights in prayer, he would pray before important decisions, and on one occasion he taught his disciples to pray, the prayer we call the Lord's Prayer or the Our Father. In John's Gospel we not only have Jesus at prayer but as we have just heard we hear what he is saying. The passage started with the words, Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: is this an invitation to us to think of how we prepare ourselves for pray? He has made the Father's name known to the disciples, they have accepted his teaching, and now he prays for them because they are going to continue his work in a hostile world.

Jesus knows that his work on earth is coming to an end, that the following day he is going to be tortured and put to death and yet he speaks of being glorified and of giving glory to the Father. How can such a painful death give anyone glory. It is barbaric and scandalous of course and if his death had been the end that is how it would have remained with an absent God and a victorious Satan. But it was not the end, and therein lies the glory, in the resurrection. God is with us in our pain, rejection, humiliation. God is with those who will die during this pandemic. God is in the hospital in Kabul, the refugee camp is Lesbos, the migrant risking all for a better life. God is present in those who go to the aid of such people and others who through no fault of their own endure enormous suffering. In these days before Pentecost we pray for the outpouring of the Spirit on our world, in need of much healing, on our Church needing to find new ways to live out the Gospel, and on ourselves for a new vision of God's glory, a new experience of God's power, a new faithfulness to God's Word and a new consecration to God service, that God love may grow among us and God's kingdom come.

Bidding Prayers for the 7th Sunday of Easter

Celebrant:

As disciples who yearn for the kingdom that is to come we turn to God in prayer, giving glory to God's name.

Reader:

For all those who have been baptised into Christ – that they may glory to God through him by how they live and what they say.

Lord in your mercy

For all those who govern people and nations – that they may do so with justice upholding the rights of all and pursuing the Common Good.

Lord in your mercy

For all those who suffer for the name of Christ, especially in those places where Christianity is persecuted – that we will support them with our prayers, helping them to remain faithful to Christ's name.

Lord in your mercy

For those who struggle with pain in their minds or bodies on a daily basis, especially those with arthritis, cancer and mental issues – that they may receive relief from their suffering and be given hope for a better future.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the coronavirus, and Patrick Verity, Harry Wood, Kenneth Baldwin, Harry Smith, Mary Kennedy, Anne Lewis and Tony Ellis whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or 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, pour out your Spirit upon your people, and grant us: a new vision of your glory, a new experience of your power, a new faithfulness to your Word and a new consecration to your service, that your love may grow among us and your kingdom come. Through Christ our Lord. Amen