

6th Sunday of Easter

A sentence from the second reading today may well strike a chord at this time of pandemic when we are looking for answers to the decisions made by the Government which they hope will lead us through the pandemic. "Reverence the Lord Christ in your hearts, and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have." The Government might have hoped that the lifting of some restrictions would have been welcomed, but instead there was criticism about mixed messages and general confusion. Those urged to return to work want to know, not just hope, that it will be safe to do so. Parents struggling with home schooling and children becoming increasingly restless will still want to know, not just hope, that their children will be safe when the schools open for some Class Years at the beginning of June. Whereas the opening of Garden Centres last Wednesday certainly brought more than a glimmer of hope both to the owners knowing that their hard work will now be rewarded, and to those who now know they can put new plants in their gardens.

In today's gospel passage Jesus continues to prepare the disciples for the time he will no longer be with them in the way that he is at present. He speaks of the Father giving to those who love him another Advocate who will be with them for ever. An Advocate is someone who is on our side, if in a court of law it would be someone speaking for us, hopefully as well someone whose primary motive is to seek the truth rather than to win a case. Jesus calls the Advocate, 'that Spirit of truth whom the world can never receive...' but who is in the disciples and in us. So here Jesus is telling them and us that he will not leave us orphans, to fend for ourselves often in a hostile or indifferent environment, rather he will be with us, not physically, but spiritually. And we do well to remember that this spiritual presence is not some other worldly presence at the end of time, but here and now, guiding us by reminding us of what Jesus said and did and leading us to the fullness of truth.

Jesus leaving his disciples could have caused them a sense of hopelessness, but that is not the case, rather he gives them reason to hope because he is assuring them that they will never be alone, that the Holy Spirit, as we heard in the first reading, comes to us at the very beginning of our existence and then sacramentally at baptism. This Spirit is given to us to be advocates of the poor, the disenfranchised, those unable to speak for themselves by bringing the light of the Gospel on to those things in our world contrary to the Gospel, be those inequalities and lack of social provision in our own country, or oppressive regimes in other parts of the world; the greed of those involved in drug cartels or people trafficking which bring death and misery to thousands of people who have a right to a free and fulfilled life. Another evil is discrimination, prevalent in many places. Only this week Christians and other religious minorities in Pakistan were refused medical aid against coronavirus. Jesus condemned all and every form of discrimination and came to show us how to live life to the full. That is our hope, indeed our determination, that we, filled with the Spirit, will do the same.

Bidding Prayers for the 6th Sunday of Easter

Celebrant:

Jesus promises to remain with us until the end of time. Keeping his commandments by walking in the way of love we pray for the world so in need of healing and hope.

Reader:

For the Church – that it will give all its members the gift of hope to see that things need not remain the way they are but can be transformed by our cooperating with the Holy Spirit who leads us to the fullness of Truth.

Lord in your mercy

For leaders and Governments – that they will uphold the human rights of all people, releasing those wrongly imprisoned, and recognising legitimate opposition.

Lord in your mercy

For those places in our world that are scarred by war and violence – that ways may be found to bring about reconciliation and peace.

Lord in your mercy

For those who are sick, especially those who struggle with mental illness or are ravaged by addiction – that they may be raised to a new and more abundant life.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the Covid-19 pandemic, for Fr David Drake-Brokman a retired priest of the diocese who died last week and Patrick McGreal, Thomas Robinson, Michael Leslie, Amy Louise Woodcock, Thomas Caulfield, Mary Clifford and Albert Ford 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 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:

God of infinite wisdom, your Son promises to remain with us always by sending the Spirit of Love. Help us to remain in him with a hope that never fails. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen