

## Homily for the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

Today we are in the in between time having celebrated the Ascension last Thursday and waiting to celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost next Sunday. In the first reading we hear of Stephen, already filled with the Holy Spirit and about to become the first martyr. What we have is the very end of his extremely long speech to the religious leaders of his day who accuse him of blasphemy and stone him to death. Before he died, as they were stoning him, Stephen said, Lord Jesus receive my spirit. This is a prayer we can make our own, not just at the point of death, but every day as we offer our minds, hearts and all that we do into the safe and loving embrace of Jesus who died for us. Stephen's final words echo those of the dying Jesus in Luke's gospel, Lord do not hold this sin against them. In this he gives us an example of forgiveness in the most dire of circumstances, refusing to hold on to grudges or seek vengeance.

When we come to the Gospel we have Jesus at prayer. It is the section in John's Gospel known as the priestly prayer of Jesus on the night before he died. He has prayed for the disciples who were with him and now he widens the prayer to include all those who would come to believe in him through the witness and example of others, and that includes ourselves. 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.

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 are suffering so greatly in Ukraine as the war intensifies. God is with the women and girls who are being denied so many human rights in Afghanistan. God is with the refugees in Lesbos and with the migrants 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. God is with those suffering from starvation in Somalia. God is with those suffering in body mind and spirit and those caring for them.

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's service, that God's love may grow among us and God's kingdom come.

## Bidding Prayers for the 7<sup>th</sup> 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 give 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 – 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 Covid 19 pandemic, and Anne Lewis, Tony Ellis, Margaret O'Driscoll and Pat Collins 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 the Regina Coeli which you will find at the back of the newsletter:

**O Queen of heaven, rejoice, Alleluia! For he whom you did merit to bear, Alleluia! Has risen as he said, Alleluia! Pray for us to God, Alleluia! Rejoice and be glad O Virgin Mary, Alleluia! For the Lord has risen indeed, Alleluia.**

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