



GOD'S WORD FOR THIS WEEK

Powerscourt with Kilbride

Sunday 24th May 2020

The Seventh Sunday of Easter

The Sunday after Ascension Day

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

O God the King of Glory,
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ
with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:
Mercifully give us faith to know
that, as he promised,
he abides with us on earth to the end of time;
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

THE FIRST READING (Acts 1:6-14)

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' ⁷He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' ⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. ¹³When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of* James. ¹⁴All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

THE SECOND READING (1 Peter 4:12-14, 1 Peter 5:6-11)

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory,^[a] which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you.

⁶ Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Discipline yourselves, keep alert.^[a] Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters^[b] in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. ¹⁰ And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

THE GOSPEL READING (John 17: 1-11)

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ²since you have given him authority over all people, * to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. ⁵So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

⁶ 'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

THE PSALM 68

- 1 Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered;
let those that hate him flee before him.
- 2 As the smoke vanishes, so may they vanish away;
as wax melts at the fire,
so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.
- 3 But let the righteous be glad and rejoice before God;
let them make merry with gladness.
- 4 Sing to God, sing praises to his name;
exalt him who rides on the clouds.
The Lord is his name; rejoice before him.
- 5 Father of the fatherless, defender of widows,
God in his holy habitation!
- 6 God gives the solitary a home
and brings forth prisoners to songs of welcome,
but the rebellious inhabit a burning desert.

- 7 O God, when you went forth before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness,
8 The earth shook and the heavens dropped down rain,
at the presence of God, the Lord of Sinai,
at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
9 You sent down a gracious rain, O God;
you refreshed your inheritance when it was weary.
10 Your people came to dwell there;
in your goodness, O God, you provide for the poor.
32 Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth;
make music in praise of the Lord;
33 He rides on the ancient heaven of heavens
and sends forth his voice, a mighty voice.
34 Ascribe power to God, whose splendour is over Israel,
whose power is above the clouds.
35 How terrible is God in his holy sanctuary,
the God of Israel, who gives power and strength to his people!
Blessed be God.

Pointers for Prayer

The First Reading

'¹⁴All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer..' (Acts 1:14)

It is a relatively short space of time between Jesus' resurrection and his ascension into heaven. In all that he has taught his disciples throughout his active ministry, through words and actions, Jesus continues to instruct and (as we will read in the Gospel today) look out and care for his disciples for the future days to come. Today's scriptures all speak, in some way, about the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (next Sunday in our Liturgical Calendar). The First reading is chosen to mark Ascension Day (Thursday 21st May) where Jesus says *'⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8).*

In this First Reading Jesus is taken up into heaven in a cloud, right in front of his followers eyes! One more dramatic, and possibly traumatic, event within their lives. It is interesting the response to all these events is to gather even more diligently together and devote themselves to prayer.

In our lives, we are not privy to such dramatic Christ-filled events and yet, the same uncertainty that may have surrounded Jesus disciples in the loneliness between Ascension and Pentecost exacts one main response – to pray! Perhaps we should ask ourselves today 'are we drawn to pray, in the face of difficulty and uncertainty?'

The Second Reading

We are reminded again this week that following Christ is not always an easy journey. Suffering is also part of our human experience, but we are not alone in our suffering. Could we consider that 'life in abundance' may incorporate all of life's experiences but that our discomfort will (after a little while) be removed as *the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you.*

Do you feel alone in suffering? Can you find the presence of God at the coalface of your life, whatever life brings?

The Gospel Reading

Every word that comes from the mouth of Christ is deliberate and specifically chosen to reveal God in more detail. Today, it is interesting to see inside the prayers of Christ (the one who taught us to pray in the first place). Even though he has explained the coming of the Holy Spirit into the lives of those he leaves behind, their lives will never be the same again. They are 'in him and he in them'.

Finding the right words to leave with someone you love when you can no longer inhabit that space in the air beside them is difficult. Perhaps today we can consider those we love who we cannot be with. What would our prayer be to God for their protection? What would we like to ask God to protect us from this day?