

Seventh Sunday of Easter

† Sunday, 24 May 2020



Cycle of Prayer: New Members of the Church

Keynote: The Spirit of Truth at work in the midst of the Church

The Acts of the Apostles 1: 12-14

Luke the narrator of the deeds of the apostles, tells how after the Ascension of the Lord, the disciples returned to the upper room in Jerusalem where they were staying. Identifying the apostles by name, Luke says, *'All these joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus.'* It does seem with hindsight, that this period of continuous prayer by the early Christian community is a significant preparation for what is to happen on the day of Pentecost not many days hence. By tradition, the Church still enters this period of prayer in preparation for the coming feast.

Today the Church in selecting this passage, not only invites us to enter into prayer, but also points us to the text in today's gospel with Jesus in prayer. This is a time for deepening our personal faith and an opportunity to develop our understanding of the gospel, and make it happen in our lives.

The First Letter of Peter 4: 13-16

Peter, throughout his letter, seems to refer to the possibility of his readers being persecuted for their faith in Jesus. Here, he is specific, *'If you have some share in the sufferings of Christ, be glad, because you will enjoy a much greater gladness when his glory is revealed.'* Peter reminds them that the accusations being laid against the believer, are not, *'for being a murderer, a thief, a criminal or an informer... so the (Christian) is not to be ashamed of it.'* Instead, Peter would have us understand that such insults and false charges that are laid against us, are to be seen as *'a blessing for you when they insult you for bearing the name of Christ, because it means that you have the Spirit of glory, the Spirit of God resting on you.'* Then it is time the apostle says, for the disciple to, *'thank God that he has been called one.'*

Time for us also 'to give thanks' for the discipleship to which we have been called.

Gospel according to John 17: 1-11

Jesus' prayer for the disciples has some similarities with the Lord's Prayer recorded elsewhere in the gospels. For Jesus addresses God as Father. *'Father, the hour has come: glorify your Son...'* The text glorifies God, speaks of doing God's will and is accompanied by a petition to be delivered from the 'evil one'. As part of the 'Farewell Discourse' at the Last Supper Jesus' Prayer reflects the unity which exists between Father, Son and Spirit. *'Father, the hour has come,' says Jesus, 'glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you... let him give eternal life (Spirit) to all those you have entrusted to him.'*

Like other prayers of this type in the Old Testament, Jesus' Prayer looks to the future, as if it were already here. *'I am not in the world any longer, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.'* So Jesus says, *'I pray for them. I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me, because they belong to you... in them I am glorified.'*

Contained in this prayer is the mission of every disciple, for Jesus says, *'I have made your name known to those you took from the world to give to me... and they have kept your word... and have believed that it was you who sent me.'*

The mission we have received is to listen to God's word, to believe, and to share it with the world.