

Sixth Sunday of Easter

† Sunday, 9 May 2021



In England & Wales Cycle of Prayer: New members of the Church

Keynote: The discipleship of true love

Acts of the Apostles 10: 25-26, 34-35, 44-48

Today the community of faith recalls the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the first Christian community. The group of believers came to understand the meaning of what Jesus Christ had done for them. *'Peter addressed them: "The truth I have now come to realise" he said "is that God does not have favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God." While he was still speaking the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners... he then gave orders for them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ.'* As on this day we receive the good news about Jesus – about his death and resurrection – we too can come to realise the truth, and to respond in faith. The invitation is open to everyone of whatever race, nationality or cultural background. The only real requirement is that we respect God in our lives and do only what is right and acceptable to God.

Responsorial Psalm 97 (98) – A song of praise to the coming of God among his people

First Letter of John 4: 7-10

The words from John's letter put the same message very simply. *'My dear people,'* he writes *'let us love one another since love comes from God.'* John reminds us that if we don't love, then we have nothing in common with God, and for John, that means we really have no life in us. Just in case we should think we could manage all this for ourselves, the apostle reminds us again that what he is talking about is God's love for us revealed in Christ. *'God's love for us was revealed when God sent into the world his only Son so that we could have life through him.'* The apostle John insists, *'this is the love I mean – not our love for God, but God's love for us.'*

Gospel according to John 15: 9-17

Jesus speaking with his disciples says, *'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love.'* These words direct our thoughts this day to the central question of love and what it means to love and to be loved.

Jesus gives us some examples: *'A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.'* Or, taking the example of slavery – all too familiar to the people of his day – Jesus says, *'You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant doesn't know his master's business, I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father.'*

The contrast is between the relationship as between a master and slave – slaves were treated as things rather than people – characterised by a lack of trust, of cruelty, of ignorance of the master's business, and on the other hand, the relationship between true friends is one of value, dignity respect. Jesus is telling us that as disciples he places his trust in us, we are his honoured friends, and he entrusts us with his business for we are commissioned in his name to share the good news. *'You did not choose me,'* says Jesus, *'no, I chose you and commissioned you to go out and bear fruit... what I command you is to love one another.'*

© Peter J Harrison 2021

Note – (In England and Wales)

† Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord – Thursday, 13 May 2021 – Holiday of Obligation