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6th Sunday of Easter - 14 May 2023

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14 May 2023

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Reflection by Michele Purcell

Introduction

The readings today reflect the post Easter joy that the Spirit brings to the early Christian communities. Followers of the risen Jesus are urged to be courageous and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, take responsibility for continuing Jesus' mission in the world.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you show us the way to the Father. Lord have mercy.

You draw us into the life of the Spirit. Christ have mercy.

You teach us how to be Church. Lord have mercy.

Collect

The Oration

Grant, almighty God,

that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion these days of joy,

which we keep in honor of the risen Lord,

and that what we relive in remembrance

we may always hold to in what we do.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

With the Season of Easter into its sixth week the collect is an encouragement to keep alive the celebration of the great feast. The centrepiece is the resurrection. However, the focus falls onto the hearts and actions of the faithful. The prayer seeks an ongoing depth of joyous devotion in tandem with a tenacious fidelity to the implications which the celebrations have for everything we do. There are a number of curious features to the oration. The verb 'relive' does not fully capture the sense of action and involvement of the original Latin, which carries a sense of 'running through'. Moreover, the complete oration is a modern composite, with various clauses taken from a preface during a fast, a December Mass for the feast of John the evangelist, and an Easter liturgy, all from the ancient sources.

Acknowledgement

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal *Celebrate!* (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

The Apostles, from their base in Jerusalem, were heartened by Philip's success preaching the good news in Samaria. They sent Peter and John to pray with them so that the Samaritans, too, would receive the Holy Spirit.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 65(66):1-7, 16, 20

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Or alleluia.

Today's psalm is part of a song of thanksgiving to God by an individual, possibly a woman, who had made a vow and is now at the temple to pay the price she had promised. She sings out loud, 'Blessed be God who did not reject my prayer, nor withhold his love from me.' We are reminded of Hannah who vowed to gift her son to God if she could only be blessed with a child (1Samual 1:11).

Second Reading

1 Peter 3:15-18

In the Second Reading today, Peter writes to encourage the persecuted Christians in Asia Minor to always behave justly and be respectful to everyone, especially to those who are not followers of Christ.

Gospel Reading

John 14:15-21

I shall ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate.

Reflection

Today's gospel reminds us of the constant care and concern that loving mothers and fathers bestow on their children. Just as parents arrange for a carer or relative to guide their children if they need to be out of the home for a while, Jesus is reassuring his disciples that – while he will soon leave them – he will not leave them without support. He will ask the Father to give them 'another Advocate' – (Jesus being the first Advocate) – who is the 'Spirit of truth' to stay with them – and this Spirit will stay forever (14:16-17).

Members of John the Evangelist's community have been prepared for the coming of the Spirit from the very beginning of his gospel. The Spirit is mentioned four times

before chapter 14. In chapter 1, John the Baptist identified Jesus as the one on whom the Spirit descended and remained, and who 'baptises with the Holy Spirit' (1:32-34). Later, Jesus spoke to the pharisee, Nicodemus, about being 'born of water and the Spirit' (3:8). At Capernaum, Jesus says to his disciples, 'It is the spirit that gives life ... the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life' (6:63). Finally, on the last day of the Festival of Booths, Jesus speaks of 'the Spirit which believers in him were to receive' after he was glorified (7:39).

Today's gospel (14:15-21) continues the instruction given to his disciples by Jesus in last Sunday's gospel (14:1-12). The whole of chapter 14 is concerned with Jesus' plan to prepare the disciples for his death. It is just one section of Jesus' 'farewell discourses' in John. The discourses (13:33-17:26) are unique to John's gospel, and sections are read in our liturgies from Easter to Pentecost.

Farewell discourses are records of teachings spoken by leaders, as they are about to die, to encourage their people to continue to live justly when they are gone. They occur in the First Testament scriptures from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings. Leaders of Israel such as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and David all left farewell discourses. John's inclusion of the Jesus' lengthy discourse material indicates that Jesus is taking his place as a great leader of Israel, too. John uses the ancient discourses as a model to shape Jesus' last message for his community. He is conscious of recording the significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for his own community who probably lived during the 80s or 90s CE in Ephesus. Readers today are invited to embrace John's theology too, and to become aware of the love of God that is constantly offered to us through Jesus and the Spirit.

In today's gospel selection, Jesus constantly reminds his disciples of God's love for them – an intimate indwelling love – which binds Jesus and the Father and the Spirit with his followers. At the beginning and the end of the gospel, Jesus instructs them to keep his commandments. In John, obeying commandments is not an onerous task. It is simply the way people communicate their love and desire for intimacy with their God. It is the natural response to the offer of love from the Father.

In the fourth gospel we read of a strong desire for God to draw people close to Godself to experience a communion of love with the Father and with Jesus. This close relationship will happen when Jesus asks the Father to send the 'Spirit of truth' to the disciples to abide with them (vv17-18). After Jesus' glorification they will recognise this Spirit because it is the same Spirit that has been with Jesus all through his ministry (1:33). This promise of love and closeness is repeated in verse 20: 'On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you'.

The life Jesus promises is the same life – the intimate communion – he enjoys with the Father. The absence of the earthly Jesus will not result in leaving his followers as if they were orphans (v 18). The Spirit, sent by the Father, will stay with them forever (v 16).

In today's First Reading (Acts 8:5-8,14-17) we witness Philip preaching the gospel in Samaria and, 'as a result there was great rejoicing in that town (v8). The Samaritan people may have been the traditional enemies of the Jewish people, but we can see

that they, too, were not meant to be left as 'orphans' (Jn 14:18). The all-inclusive power of the Spirit, which cannot be contained, was sent to abide with them too (Jn 14:17). Pope Francis believes that 'the Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open ... so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door' (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 24 Nov 2013, par 47).

In the Second Reading today, Peter writes to encourage the persecuted Christians in Asia Minor. The words 'reverence the Lord Jesus in your hearts' resonates with today's gospel which speaks of the intimate nature of the relationship the disciples of Jesus have with him and with the Father (Jn 14: 20). Even though they are in a foreign land, obeying the commandments should always be an indication of their love for God (Jn 14:21).

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

The psalmist calls on us to cry out to God with joy. With confidence we offer our needs and the needs of our world.

Petitions

We pray for the Church, under the leadership of Pope Francis that in this season of Easter we may bear witness to the joy that the Gospel brings as we move towards the Synod.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the Church in Australia, that the joy of Easter will inspire all involved to work hard towards implementing the Plenary Council and engaging in the preparation for the Synod.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the world and for the nations that are struggling against injustice. We especially for those nations at war in the hope that peaceful resolutions will prevail over violence and hatred.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are suffering, especially those who are contemplating suicide, that the Holy Spirit will convince them of the immense love that is available to them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those in our community who are grieving the loss of loved ones. May the joy of the Easter season become real for them in the witness of those who care for them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all of us gathered here in your name. In this Easter season, may we experience the resurrection of Jesus Christ in our lives and be ready to share that joy with all whom we meet.

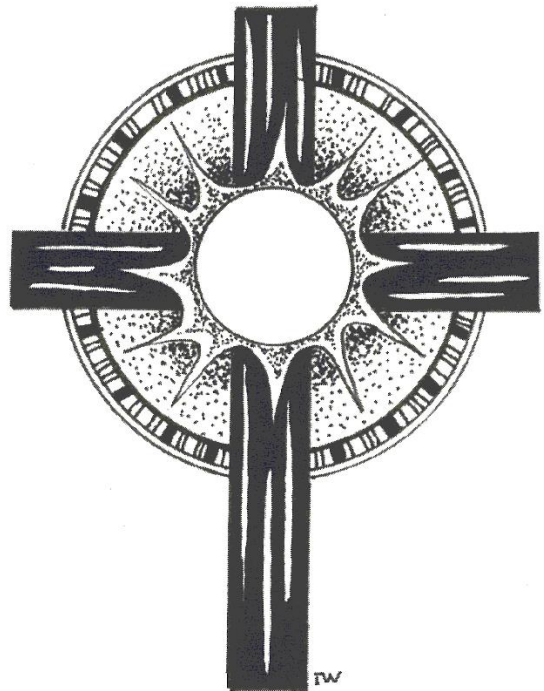
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

With the hope and joy of the Easter season we offer these petitions and those in the silence of our hearts with true knowledge that all will be provided through the power of the Spirit in the name of Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.

**Christ,
the Good Shepherd,
went before us
through suffering
and death.**



Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Sixth Sunday of Easter Year A, (14 May 2023)

Title	AOV1	AOV2	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
All you nations				616	347	353
Alleluia! Sing to Jesus	191			619	449	371
As gentle as silence				621	580	
Christ the Lord is ris'n` again				646	354	
Christians, lift up your hearts					355	
Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come				654	382	376
Faith, hope and love				249		
For the journey			128			
Holy Spirit, come, confirm us				707	386	
Make me a channel of your peace		126		793	555	490
My soul is longing for your peace				751	559	519
No greater love					622	460
Now the green blade rises		131		756	363	364
Peace I leave with you my friends				785		517
Sing to the Lord	46					

Title	S&S1	S&S2
Alleluia! Sing to Jesus	97	
Let all the earth	69	
Let all the earth cry out		261

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 65: *Let all the earth cry out to God with joy/Alleluia!*

	CWB	JOBA	LPA	PM
Psalm 65	308	pg. 48	pg. 59	pg. 52

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Easter alleluia (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]

Sing out with joy (FWS) *Based on Ps 66* [Gathering, Gifts]

A life of love (TT/SYJ) [Gifts, Communion]