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Sixth Sunday of Easter - 5 May 2024

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5 May 2024

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Reflection by Anthony Doran

Introduction

As we move further away from Easter Sunday, the tenor of our readings changes: now they are more focussed on the departure of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit. We also see a widening of the mission, no longer solely to the children of Israel, but to all the peoples of 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 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

This Sunday we return to Peter's preaching. As he preaches in the house of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit comes upon all who are listening to him – Jews and 'pagans' alike. While Paul's preaching is largely seen as widening the scope of the mission to the Gentiles, in this reading we see Peter's part in this, too.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 97(98):1-4

The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

This psalm is a psalm of praise to God, the victorious king, who has worked wonders, bringing salvation and making known God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

Second Reading

1 John 4:7-10

A still further meditation on love from the First Letter of John. We are to love one another because love comes from God. The proof? God's love for us when he sent his Son be the sacrifice that takes our sins away.

OR

1 John 4:11-16

We are to love one another because this is what we have learnt and experienced from God who first loved us. When we love, God will be with us.

Gospel Reading

John 15:9-17

This Sunday's reading is perhaps one of the more famous extracts from John's Gospel and establishes the new relationship between Jesus and his followers. Because of the love with which Christ has loved us, we are no longer servants or slaves, but rather, friends. Friends who share in everything Jesus has learnt from his Father, friends who are commissioned to go and bear fruit.

OR

John 17:11-19

Part of the so-called 'High Priestly Prayer of Jesus' for his disciples at the Last Supper. With the looming departure of Jesus from this realm, he prays that those entrusted with his ongoing ministry may remain faithful to this task.

Reflection

A friend of mine, an older lady whom I have known since I was ordained, often asks me what I am preaching about on a given weekend. And if I happen to say that I am

preaching about love, she'll come back at me with 'You priests...you're always talking about love...'

Even if you have not listened particularly carefully to the readings which have just been proclaimed, you should still be able to pick up that love features very heavily in these readings. Nine times is it mentioned in the Gospel, and nine times in the second reading.

Central to this treatise on love are the words of Jesus in the Gospel: 'Love one another as I have loved you.' Like some of the scriptural readings we have heard during this season of Easter, it sounds like an unreal and impossible request. First it was the early Christian living in harmony and sharing all that they had in common. Now, we must love others as Jesus has loved us. But we ask the question, 'How do I do this?...I don't even like some people, how on earth am I meant to love them?' Jesus never asks us to do something without showing us the way to do it. How does he show us the way?

The second reading today reminds us that God is love. So, to go about loving as Jesus did, we must remember, first and foremost, that God is the source of love. Next, we are called to keep the commandments. Now, is this keeping a set of laws, or living by the rule of the Gospel? No, the commandment of the Gospel is the commandment to love. And if it is still unclear, Jesus gives one more example: 'You can have no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends.' More of this unreal Easter stuff? Sounds like it, doesn't it? Until we remember that Jesus did exactly that – gave up his life for those he loved – his friends. And that is precisely what we are now because Jesus did lay down his life for us. His friends. Friendship implies equality. Through his death and resurrection, we are brought into a new relationship with Jesus. As friends. We are no longer servants.

This relationship of friends, however, carries with it an obligation. Because we are now friends of the Master – because we know his business – we have a mission. And our mission – should we choose to accept it – is to go and bear fruit – to pass the Good News of Salvation on to others. For to claim the name Christian, is to be a missionary. To proclaim this good news of salvation to others.

I don't know whether any of you have seen the slogan WWJD. I think it comes from some of the Protestant Pentecostal-type Churches in America, and can be found on jewellery, on bookmarks, coffee mugs, probably even on boxer shorts. WWJD stands for 'What Would Jesus Do.' I suppose the idea behind this slogan is a good one: by having the letters WWJD in front of our eyes all the time, it is a reminder of being a Christian. But I think people who have WWJD jewellery, coffee mugs etc have missed the point. In some senses, it is no good asking what would Jesus do. Because Jesus is not here. We are. In this season of Easter, we are reminded of our Baptism. We are baptised into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We are called to be the Christ in the world today. So, it is no good asking 'What Would Jesus Do?' We know what he did. The question is what will we do? And Jesus has given us the answer: 'love one another as I have loved you.'

As followers of the Risen Christ, let us pray that we may ever be opened to the power of God's love by loving others as God has loved us.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

People of God, the psalmist declares that we should sing a new song to the Lord who has worked wonders. With confidence in these wonders we have witnessed we offer our petitions.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis and all the leaders of the Church. May they offer true witness to the world in the way that they love one another and the People of God.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of our world; leaders of industry, economics and politics. May they come to understand that the only thing worth giving to one another is love. May they work together for justice and an equitable future.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are suffering from mental illness, especially those who are contemplating suicide, that the Holy Spirit will convince them of the immense love God has for them through the compassion that they experience.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who work in the food industry. May they be treated fairly at all times and find reward in caring properly for the earth.
(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.

We pray for all those who have died. May they experience the joy of the resurrection and may those that mourn for them be comforted in their grief.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

God of love, knowing that you sent your only Son, we also know that you will accept these petitions we have put before you, grant them through the power of your Spirit and in the name of Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year B (5 May 2024)

Title	AOV1	AOV2	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
A new commandment				615	443	318
All the earth, proclaim the Lord	184			611	447	534
Christ is alive, with joy we sing				639	353	365
Christians, let us love one another				648	469	206
Come down, O love divine	118			375	381	375
Filled with the Spirit's power, with one accord				676	385	
For the journey			128			
God is love, let heav'n adore him					499	
I have loved you	126				511	402
In perfect charity	142					
Love divine, all loves excelling				740	552	463
Love is his word				743	553	462
No greater love					622	460
Now the green blade rises		131		756	363	364
One bread, one body	129				579	193
Remain in my love	159				452	
Sing to the Lord	46					
Take and eat					608	198
The Spirit lives to set us free			95			
This is my commandment				248	312	
This is my will, my one command				842	626	465
Ubi caritas (Gregorian chant)					639	319
Ubi caritas (Taize)					633	324
Unless a grain of wheat					635	
Where there is charity and love				863	638	323

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 97: *The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power./Alleluia.*

	CWB	JOBB	LPB
Psalm 97	309	pg. 18	pg. 68

Music selections by Michael Mangan

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

Sing new songs of joy (FWS, CWBII) *Based on Ps 97/98* [Gathering]

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