

Pentecost Year A

Acts 2:1-11

1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

John 20:19-23

Pentecost Sequence

Holy Spirit, Lord of Light,
From the clear celestial height.
Thy pure beaming radiance give.

Come, thou Father of the poor,
Come, with treasures which endure;
Come, thou Light of all that live!

Thou, of all consolers best,
Thou, the soul's delightful guest,
Dost refreshing peace bestow.

Thou in toil art comfort sweet;
Pleasant coolness in the heat;
Solace in the midst of woe.

Light immortal, Light divine,
Visit thou these hearts of thine,
And our inmost being fill.

If thou take thy grace away,
Nothing pure in man will stay;
All his good is turned to ill.

Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour thy dew,
Wash the stains of guilt away.

Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.

Thou, on us who evermore
Thee confess and thee adore,
With thy sevenfold gifts descend.

Give us comfort when we die;
Give us life with thee on high;
Give us joys that never end.
Amen. Alleluia.

On the fiftieth day – which is what Pentecost means – the Jew of Jesus’s day recalled the gift of the law on Mount Sinai. Fifty days after Easter the Gospel records for us the giving of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles for their work of evangelisation; their task of spreading the Good News of the Gospel to all the nations of the earth. S. Luke in his second work, the Acts of the Apostles, tells us in today’s lection that the message of the Apostles was proclaimed, heard and understood by people from all the nations. In this S. Luke gives us an image, a picture of the word of God, which, as the psalmist tells us, would: “Go out to the upmost bounds of the world”.

In today’s Gospel we have the risen Lord breathing on the Apostles and equipping them with the power to loose and bind sin. We also have Jesus dispelling fear and granting his peace to his frightened followers who were gathered behind the locked doors – yes of the upper room but also of shattered hearts.

As we reflect today on the scriptures for this great solemnity I would ask you to hold before the Lord two things.

Firstly, all of those who would at or around this time have been admitted to Holy Communion or would have been Confirmed. It is my hope that both of these important events will take place as soon as is practically possible after the lifting of the lockdown. I understand that among candidates, parents, families and friends there must be great disappointment that these key events have had to be put on hold. However, remember that the Lord is faithful and will bring to completion all things for the good of those who love him.

Secondly, we need to start to think through the issues that need to be faced and the procedures that need implementing when (pray God) soon we will be able to at first open the church for private prayer and then resume public masses and other forms of public worship. There will be the practical considerations surrounding making the building and our gatherings as Covid-secure as possible but also we will have to face up to the terrible damage that this period of lockdown will have wreaked upon our parish life. I will give you but three examples.

It is one thing to shut down an organisation, it is quite another to start it up again! Although our church has not been closed – the Masses etc have still been celebrated – it has all been done without you, the people of God, being physically present. We need to start to put in place measures to gather together again our various congregations. Some, perhaps most, will simply return to Sunday Mass etc as soon as possible. However, we have no contact details for some people; some having got out of the habit of coming to Mass will find it hard to resume; some will have found the cessation of public worship so painful that they will find return difficult; some may be afraid to gather; others still may have found that the vacuum left on a Sunday has become filled with other things.

The whole of creation tends to decay. Although the church has been in use every day during lockdown and one or two jobs have been done, it is nevertheless clear that some things have not been tackled for some time. So there will be many jobs that need doing, many physical problems that will need to be addressed. Also, we will need to have measures in place to implement any church/government requirements to make gathering together as safe as possible.

Thirdly, our finances have taken quite a hit and that is an understatement! We have still been receiving financial contributions from those of you who give by standing order. But, we have had no planned giving envelopes, no loose collection, no candle income, very few mass stipends for almost ten weeks. But the bills etc have still been coming in. So now, as well as having our planned-for long-term building debt, we are going to end the year in the red as far as the day-to-day running costs of the parish are concerned.

Clearly these are headaches for us but they are also opportunities for a reassessment of our mission, ministry, outreach and our identity as the Catholic Church. Maybe this really is a God given time for us to look again at our priorities and the way in which we engage with our faith.

Once we are allowed to, I intend to meet with the PPC and the finance committee to look at all of these issues and our response. Please do pray at this time for our parish, for the diocese, the Ordinariate and the whole Church as together we face the challenges of the near future.

In the next few days please pray for our country and the world as we move forward together in the battle against this terrible pathogen and pray for the Church of God throughout the world, that with faith, courage and resolve we may bear witness to the hope that is in us and make Jesus known near and far.

The Portal

Please note that the online version of The Portal magazine is published on 1 June and can be downloaded at www.portalmag.com.

Mass Intentions

The parish has now fulfilled nearly all the Mass intentions that have come into the office. If you would like a Mass offered please either send the details to the parish office or drop them through the clergy house door.

Fr Rob