

Readings and Reflections for the Week

Sunday 10 May - SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Reading 1, Acts 8:5-8,14-17, Psalm 65(66)
Reading 2, 1 Peter 3:15-18, Gospel, John 14:15-21
I am the Way, the Truth and the Life

Monday 11 May - Easter Feria

Reading 1, Acts 16:11-15, Psalm 149
Gospel, John 15:26-16:4
The Spirit of truth will be my witness

Tuesday 12 May - Easter Feria

Reading 1, Acts 16:22-34, Psalm 137(138)
Gospel, John 16:5-11
Unless I go, the Advocate will not come to you

Wednesday 13 May - Our Lady of Fatima

Reading 1, Acts 17:15,22-18:1, Psalm 148
Gospel, John 16:12-15
The Spirit of truth will lead you to the complete truth

Thursday 14 May - THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Reading 1, Acts 1:1-11, Psalm 46(47), Reading 2,
Ephesians 1: 16-23, Gospel, Matthew 28: 16-20
Go and make disciples of all nations

United with Churches together in St Albans this week we pray that during Christian Aid Week we can come together – across churches, communities and households – to stand alongside people living in poverty around the world.

Friday 15 May - Easter Feria

Reading 1, Acts 18:9-18, Psalm 46(47)
Gospel, John 16:20-23
Your hearts will be full of joy that no-one will take from you

Saturday 16 May - Easter Feria

10am Confessions, Exposition and Benediction, no Mass
Reading 1, Acts 18:23-28, Psalm 46(47)
Gospel, John 16:23-28
The Father loves you for loving me and believing that I came from God

Sunday 17 May - SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Reading 1, Acts 1:12-14, Psalm 26(27)
Reading 2, 1 Peter 4:13-16, Gospel, John 17:1-11
Father, it is time for you to glorify me

SAINTS OF THE WEEK 13 May Our Lady of Fatima

Between 13 May 1913 and 13 October 1917, three Portuguese children—Francisco and Jacinta Marto and their cousin Lucia dos Santos—received apparitions of Our Lady at Cova da Iria near Fatima, a city 110 miles north of Lisbon. Mary asked the children to pray the rosary for world peace, for the end of World War I, for sinners, and for the conversion of Russia. On 13 October 1917, the final apparition was the Miracle of the Sun that was witnessed by thousands of onlookers. As the sun danced in the sky, it emitted vibrant colours that appeared to descend towards the Earth. Mary gave the children three secrets. Following the deaths of Francisco and Jacinta in 1919 and 1920 respectively, Lucia revealed the first secret in 1927. It concerned devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The second secret was a vision of hell. When Lucia grew up she became a Carmelite nun and died in 2005 at the age of 97. Pope John Paul II directed the Holy See's Secretary of State to reveal the third secret in 2000; it spoke of a "bishop in white" who was shot by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows into him. Many people linked this vision to the assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II in St. Peter's Square on 13 May 1981.

The Fatima Prayer

This brief prayer can be added to the end of each decade of the Rosary, as requested by Our Lady of Fatima to the children in 1917. "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy".

REFLECTIONS ON THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Taken from **The Wednesday Word** {www.wednesdayword.org}

GOSPEL, JOHN 14:15-21

Only in John's Gospel is the Spirit whom the Father will send called 'the Advocate' or 'the Paraclete'. Both names have the same derivation and the same meaning, but the former is from the Latin language, the latter from the Greek. It means someone 'called to one's side' as a helper, principally as a defender in a lawsuit. The word 'Paraclete' also suggests comfort and strength, as implied in the quality 'paraclesis' or perseverance. In the discourse after the Last Supper, when Jesus is preparing his disciples for their future task, there are four separate sayings about the Paraclete. The Paraclete is sent both by Jesus and by the Father, but always from the Father's side. The Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, will teach the disciples everything and lead them into all truth, witnessing to the Father. The Paraclete is 'another Paraclete', that is, other than Jesus, who will make Jesus present when Jesus is no longer physically with the disciples. The close link and interplay between these three figures (Father, Son and Spirit) gives us not only the beginnings of the theology of the Trinity, but also a lasting confidence that Jesus is never absent from his Church. With the guidance and patronage of the Paraclete the Church enters more and more deeply into the understanding of the divine mystery.

Why do we need a Paraclete to guide us

First Reading Acts of the Apostles 8:5-8,14-17

The story of Acts is the story of the spread of the Gospel to 'the ends of the earth'. The first few chapters described the ideal Church at Jerusalem. That ideal was shattered by the persecution which erupted and led to Stephen's martyrdom. We missed out that story, reserving it for St Stephen's feast on Boxing Day. Things get too hot in Jerusalem itself, and the effect is that the Word of the Lord begins to spread beyond the city, first to Samaria, the country region just north of Jerusalem. The peace of God's Kingdom comes to the Samaritans in the form of liberation from sickness and the torment of various diseases. Luke notes for us the joy which this brings, a joy which is the sign of the Kingship of God. It is notable that the distinction between the gift of faith and the fuller gift of the Spirit is already marked in this reading just as the modern Church distinguishes between baptism and confirmation. The apostles lay their hands on those who are to receive the Spirit, just as nowadays the bishop (who signifies the unity of the Church and acts as the successor of the apostles) comes to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation.

What does the presence of the Spirit bring to your own life and the life of the Church?

Second Reading 1 Peter 3:15-18

This final reading from the first Letter of Peter gives a heartening model for defence in persecution. In modern Western society any persecution faced is more likely to be verbal mockery or contempt than blood-shedding. A Christian stance on moral issues can so easily incur charges of narrow-mindedness or blindness. It is not always easy to keep one's temper and give a fair and helpful reply 'with courtesy and respect', expressing the consequences of the Christian hope. Such a reply just might strike a chord deep down, rather than an explosive or sarcastic riposte, which merely deepens the divide. 'Reverence' for others can be a real and important Christian witness. The final sentences of the reading are helpful here, for the accounts of Jesus' trial stress that Jesus himself was silent 'like a lamb before its shearers' as the Suffering Servant of the Lord, in fulfilment of the scriptures. The Passion account is full of irony and mockery, from the High Priest, from Pilate, from the soldiers; if Jesus himself did not explode at the false accusations and mockery, but retained his dignified silence, we too should keep our cool and reply to our 'accusers' with courtesy.

How do you reply to mockery of the Catholic or Christian stance?