

Readings and Reflections for the Week

Sunday 24 May - PENTECOST SUNDAY

Reading 1, Acts 2:1-11, Psalm 103(104)

Reading 2, 1 Corinthians 12:3-7,12-13

Gospel, John 20:19-23

As the Father sent me, so I am sending you: receive the Holy Spirit

Monday 25 May - Mary Mother of the Church

Reading 1, Genesis 3:9-15,20, Psalm 86(87)

Gospel, John 19:25-34

'Behold your son. Behold your mother'

Tuesday 26 May - St Philip Neri

Reading 1, 1 Peter 1:10-16, Psalm 97(98)

Gospel, Mark 10:28-31

Whoever has left everything for the sake of the gospel will be repaid

Wednesday 27 May - ST AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY

Reading 1, 1 Thessalonian 2:2-8, Psalm 116(117)

Gospel, Luke 10:1-9

Your peace will rest on that man

Thursday 28 May -OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, ETERNAL HIGH PRIEST

Reading 1, Genesis 22:9-18, Psalm 39(40)

Gospel, Matthew 26:36-42

My soul is sorrowful to the point of death

Friday 29 May - FERIA

Reading 1, 1 Peter 4:7-13, Psalm 95(96)

Gospel, Mark 11:11-26

The fig tree, the cleansing of the temple

Saturday 30 May - FERIA

10am Confessions, Exposition and Benediction, no Mass

Reading 1, Jude 1:17,20-25, Psalm 62(63)

Gospel, Mark 11:27-33

I will not tell you my authority for acting like this

Sunday 31 May - THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

Reading 1, Exodus 34:4-6, 8-9, Psalm Daniel 3,

Reading 2, 2 Corinthians 13:11-13,

Gospel, John 20:19-23

The grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

United with Churches together in St Albans this week we pray for all members of Vineyard Christian Fellowship.

SAINT OF THE WEEK 27 May St Augustine of Canterbury

In the year 596, led by Augustine, the prior of their monastery, 40 monks set out from Rome to evangelize the Anglo-Saxons in England. Hardly had they reached Gaul when they heard stories of the ferocity of the Anglo-Saxons and of the treacherous waters of the English Channel. Augustine returned to Rome and to Gregory the Great, the pope who had sent them, who assured them that their fears were groundless. Augustine set out again. The group crossed the English Channel and landed in Kent, a territory ruled by King Ethelbert, a pagan married to a Christian, Bertha. Ethelbert received them kindly, set up a residence for them in Canterbury and within the year, on Pentecost Sunday 597, was himself baptised. After being consecrated a bishop in France, Augustine returned to Canterbury, where he founded his see. He constructed a church and monastery near where the present cathedral, begun in 1070, now stands. As the faith spread, additional sees were established at London and Rochester. Work was sometimes slow and Augustine was not always successful. Attempts to reconcile the Anglo-Saxon Christians with the original Briton Christians ended in failure. Augustine failed to convince the Britons to give up certain Celtic customs at variance with Rome and to forget their bitterness, helping him evangelise their Anglo-Saxon conquerors. Labouring patiently, Augustine wisely heeded the missionary principles suggested by Pope Gregory: purify rather than destroy pagan temples and customs; let pagan rites and festivals be transformed into Christian feasts; retain local customs as far as possible. The limited success Augustine achieved in England before his death in 605, only eight years after his arrival, would eventually bear fruit long after in the conversion of England. Augustine of Canterbury can truly be called the "Apostle of England."

Reflection

Augustine of Canterbury comes across as a very human saint, one who could suffer from a failure of nerve. For example, his first venture to England ended in a big U-turn back to Rome. He made mistakes and failed in his peace-making attempts with the Briton Christians. He often wrote to Rome for decisions on matters he could have decided on his own had he been more self-assured.

He even received mild warnings against pride from Pope Gregory, who cautioned him to “fear lest, amidst the wonders that are done, the weak mind be puffed up by self-esteem.” Augustine’s perseverance amidst obstacles and only partial success encourages today’s apostles and pioneers to struggle on despite frustrations and be satisfied with gradual advances.

REFLECTIONS ON THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

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

Gospel, John 20:19-23

At first sight this is a surprising gospel reading for Pentecost, but of course the event of Pentecost came too late to be a subject for the gospels, and we read the account of another incident where the Risen Christ gave the Spirit to his disciples. There are two emphases in the account. The first is peace. Christ brings peace to his disciples with the double greeting of peace, and peace is a Christian watchword. Peace was the song of the angels at Jesus’ birth. Each of Paul’s letters opens with a greeting of peace. The letter to the Ephesians proclaims that Christ is our peace, the removal of all worry, strife, envy, jealousy, self-seeking ambition. ‘Go in peace’ is Jesus’ dismissal of those he cures, and also the dismissal at the end of Mass. Peace was Jesus’ bequest to his disciples after the Last Supper. The second watchword is forgiveness, for God was always known as a God of mercy and forgiveness, as Jesus came to show by his constant approach to sinners. But the Lord’s Prayer shows that if we do not ourselves forgive, we block God’s forgiveness of ourselves too.’

Forgiveness is the only sure path to peace.’ Does this cause any difficulties? Which is more important to you, peace or forgiveness? Or are they the same?

First Reading Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11

The ministry of Jesus starts with the coming of the Spirit at his Baptism, and so the ministry of the Church begins with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. There can be no witness to Jesus or to his message, no spreading of the Kingship of God, without the Spirit of Jesus. Another lesson from this parallel between Baptism and Pentecost is that the task of the Church and the life of the Church are the same as those of Jesus himself: to bring God’s kingship to its fulfilment by bringing healing, love and joy through the message of the Risen Christ. The rushing wind and the tongues of fire are an allusion to the coming of God’s Spirit upon Moses and the elders in the Old Testament. So the new message is the fulfilment of the Old Testament, breaking out beyond the borders of Judaism to include all peoples of the world. The union of all these peoples, all understanding one language in their own way, is a deliberate contrast to the scene at the Tower of Babel, when the Lord split up all the peoples of the world by their inability to understand one another’s languages. The list of unpronounceable peoples is itself a witness to the universality of the Church!

How can the Church claim that, through its mission, the Spirit is at work in the world? Mention three outstanding ways in which the Church shows Christ at work today.

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 12:3-7,12-13:1-3,12-13

The slightest glance round a church full of people is enough to show the variety within the Christian community. But it needs the hints given us by Paul to remind us that every member of that community has his or her own special gift to contribute. Mercifully, these gifts are all different. It is valuable to reflect on the natural gifts that we find all around us. It is also valuable to reflect how dull, or even intolerable, life would be if I lived with a lot of clones of myself, all with the same gifts - and the same faults - as myself! Every one of us contributes something different and valuable in our own way, whether it is as the baby squeaking as a sign of new, developing life or the older person contributing wisdom, experience and even the suffering of Christ. The other inspiring thought is that all we varied and diverse people go to make up the Body, which is Christ. We all have experience of various corporate bodies, organisations and companies, but none of these other bodies makes up a person. Together we all make up that person who is Christ, since as Christians we all live and operate through Christ’s Spirit.

Who is the most Christ-like figure for you in the present or recent past?