

# Readings and Reflections for the Week

## **Sunday 3 May - FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Reading 1, Acts 6:1-7, Psalm 32(33)

Reading 2, 1 Peter 2:4-9, Gospel, John 14:1-12

*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life*

## **Monday 4 May - THE ENGLISH MARTYRS**

Reading 1, Acts 7:55-60, Psalm 30(31)

Gospel, Matthew 10:17-20

*The Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you*

## **Tuesday 5 May - Easter Feria**

Reading 1, Acts 14:19-28, Psalm 144(145)

Gospel, John 14:27-31

*A peace the world cannot give is my gift to you*

## **Wednesday 6 May - Easter Feria**

Reading 1, Acts 15:1-6, Psalm 121(122)

Gospel, John 15:1-8

*I am the vine, you are the branches*

## **Thursday 7 May - Easter Feria**

Reading 1, Acts 15:7-2, Psalm 95(96)

Gospel, John 15: 9-11

*Remain in my love*

## **Friday 8 May - St Joseph The Worker**

Reading 1, Acts 15:22-31, Psalm 56(57)

Gospel, John 15:12-17

*What I command you is to love one another*

## **Saturday 9 May - Easter Feria**

*10am Confessions, Exposition and Benediction, no Mass*

Reading 1, Acts 16:1-10, Psalm 99(100)

Gospel, John 15:18-21

*The world hated me before it hated you*

## **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*

United with Churches together in St Albans this week we pray for all members of St Leonard's church.

## **SAINTS OF THE WEEK 4 May The 40 Martyrs of England and Wales**

These Roman Catholic martyrs were executed by English authorities during the Reformation, most during the reign of Elizabeth I. An act of Parliament in 1571 made it high treason to question the queen's title as head of the Church of England thus making the practice of Roman Catholicism a treasonable act – and authorized the confiscation of the property of Roman Catholics, many of whom fled to the European continent. In the ensuing persecution, 183 English Catholics were put to death between 1577 and 1603; altogether, some 600 Catholics died in the persecutions of the 16th and 17th centuries. Some were executed for offenses as trivial as obtaining a papal license to marry. The 40 martyrs who died for their faith between 1535 and 1679 were selected from 200 already beatified by earlier popes. They were canonised by Pope Paul VI in 1970. There were 13 seminary priests, 10 Jesuits, 3 Benedictines, 3 Carthusian monks 1 Brigittine, 2 Franciscans, and 1 Austin friar. The rest were lay people: 4 men and 3 women. The 40 martyrs are: John Almond; Edmund Arrowsmith; Ambrose Barlow; John Boste; Alexander Briant; Edmund Campion; Margaret Clitherow; Philip Evans; Thomas Garnet; Edmund Gennings; Richard Gwyn; John Houghton; Philip Howard; John Jones; John Kemble; Luke Kirby; Robert Lawrence; David Lewis; Anne Line; John Lloyd; Cuthbert Mayne; Henry Morse; Nicholas Owen; John Paine; Polydore Plasden; John Plessington; Richard Reynolds; John Rigby; John Roberts; Alban Roe; Ralph Sherwin; Robert Southwell; John Stone; John Wall; Henry Walpole; Margaret Ward; Augustine Webster; Swithun Wells and Eustace White.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Taken from *The Wednesday Word* {[www.wednesdayword.org](http://www.wednesdayword.org)}

### GOSPEL, JOHN 14:1-12

As the festival of the Ascension approaches, Jesus begins to prepare his followers for his own departure from the world. There are two aspects to this teaching. Firstly Jesus speaks of the final purpose, union with the Father, and his preparation of a place for us there. He says that there is a 'room' for each of them, suggesting not that there are plenty of separate cubicles for different sets of people (bishops, babies, monks and maniacs), but that there is no lack of space in heaven. No problem of 'only one wins the prize' in this case. The second aspect is preparation for the future Church on earth, and the almost shocking promise that in the absence of Jesus – but in the strength of his Spirit – his people will do 'even greater works'. Paul teaches that believers 'make up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ', for in every age the Church fills up the measure of Christ's sufferings; it is a Church which shares its Master's trials. In the same way in every age the Church must carry on the works of Christ. In John the 'works' of Jesus are the marvellous deeds, beyond mere human powers, which show who Jesus is. We too are called on to perform marvellous deeds, beyond mere human powers, works of grace and generosity.

*What is the real joy and excitement of heaven? How may we best carry on the 'work' of Christ?*

### First Reading Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7

There are two really striking features about this story. The first is that the first officials appointed in the Church are called 'servers' or 'servants', which is what 'deacons' means. St Paul will stress, writing to the Corinthian community, that any job in the Church is a service to the community. A role in the Church does not confer a dignity which we can boast of, except in so far as it is a sharing in the service given by Christ himself, the Servant of the Lord. The most important part of our job is to attend to the needs of the community, not to preen ourselves on obtaining a grand position. The second feature of the reading is that (even so early in the life of the ideal early community) a squabble occurs. One group feels that it is being neglected. The split may even be worse than Luke allows us to see, for all the new officials appointed belong to only one of the two parties mentioned, that is to the Hellenists. This is not going to ensure an even distribution of food between the two groups! Even in a good community reconciliation of differences needs to occur constantly.

*Is there any split in your community which needs to be reconciled?*

### Second Reading 1 Peter 2:4-9

The background of this reading is the covenant between God and his people of Israel on Mount Sinai. There the mountain was so sacred that the people were not allowed to approach it. Now the author tells us that the new people of God, chosen by God, is so valuable itself that all of us (not just a leading figure) are invited to huddle close to the true sacred rock that is Christ himself. In the Old Dispensation Moses alone was holy enough to approach the mountain and offer sacrifice; now it is the whole people. It is the whole people which is now constituted as a royal priesthood and it is a consecrated people which can offer sacrifice. One of the principal emphases of the Second Vatican Council was to underline that the Eucharistic sacrifice is offered by the whole people, not by the priest alone. Yes, the priest does have a special function, that of presiding at the Eucharist, and without this presidency the Eucharist cannot take place. Nevertheless, the Eucharist is the sacrifice of the people as a whole, which the laity offer just as much as the priest. The reading also uses another Gospel image: the people of God is a house built of living stones, a living holy Temple, built on the foundation stone who is Christ and topped by the keystone who is Christ.

*What does it mean to think of the Eucharist as 'our offering'?*