

PARISH OF BLESSED JAMES BELL

*Serving St Benedict's, St Mary's & St Oswald's
Warrington*



Celebrating Sunday at Home

7th Sunday of Easter (A)
24 May 2020

Preparation

It can be helpful to prepare a little space as a focus for your prayer. Perhaps light a candle or tea light and place it next to a crucifix or icon. You might like to include some flowers as well.

Easter Song

Why not choose an Easter Hymn or Song from YouTube or a CD to begin your time of prayer.

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

Greeting

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

R. He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Introduction

As we enter the last week of Easter, it's as if we are in the Upper Room in Jerusalem with Mary and the disciples – watching, waiting and praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

First Reading

(Acts 1: 12-14)

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

After Jesus was taken up into heaven the apostles went back from the Mount of Olives, as it is called, to Jerusalem, a short distance away, no more than a sabbath walk; and when they reached the city they went to the upper room where they were staying; there were Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Jude son of James. All these joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

The word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

'Alleluia' is our Easter song. Perhaps sing the Alleluia together using a version you all know.

Gospel

(John 17: 1-11)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

R. Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said:

'Father, the hour has come:

glorify your Son

so that your Son may glorify you;

and, through the power over all mankind

that you have given him,

let him give eternal life

to all those you have entrusted to him.

And eternal life is this:

to know you,

the only true God,

and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

I have glorified you on earth

and finished the work that you gave me to do.

Now, Father, it is time for you to glorify me

with that glory I had with you

before ever the world was.

I have made your name known

to the men you took from the world to give me.

They were yours and you gave them to me,

and they have kept your word.

Now at last they know

that all you have given me comes indeed from you;

for I have given them the teaching you gave to me,

and they have truly accepted this,

that I came from you,

and have believed that it was you who sent me.

I pray for them;

I am not praying for the world

but for those you have given me,

because they belong to you:

all I have is yours

and all you have is mine,

and in them I am glorified.

I am not in the world any longer,

but they are in the world,

and I am coming to you.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection by Fr Chris Thomas

A couple of years ago, I was invited to go and lead a retreat for a group of sisters. The highlight of the week for me was a conversation I had with a 95-year-old who had been with her order for 77 years. She was as bright as a button with an outlook on life and the Church that belied her years. She told me that she had been a teacher and eventually a head mistress of a girls' school. When she retired from school, she moved into parish ministry and from there had opened a drop-in centre for those living with HIV/Aids, so her life had been full and varied. A couple of years before I met her, she had retired from the centre and the parish and now occupied herself by helping to teach English to asylum seekers. She was a great woman whose constant activity had kept her mind alert. She was witty and an absolute delight to be with. As you can imagine

the conversation took some time and as it drew to an end, she finally told me why she had come to see me. She hadn't wanted to come on the retreat, but it was an expectation within her order that a retreat would be made every year. Then she began to cry and took hold of my hand and said to me 'You see, I never knew'. It took a while to get it out of her but eventually I discovered that it was all to do with the love of God and her lack of awareness that she was a beloved child of God. It had taken 77 years of a committed religious life for her to suddenly realise that she was loved by God. Her tears were tears of joy and as she left, she said to me, 'All I will do for the rest of my life is say thank you'.

The farewell speeches of great men often ended with a prayer of protection for their followers and for their teaching to be lived out in them. This is what is happening in this part of John's Gospel. In it, Jesus pulls together all the strands of his life, as he tries to show all that he's believed in and all that he's held important that he wants us to hold on to as well. A little further on in this chapter he will pray for unity. However, at this point Jesus is inviting us to focus on the wonder and beauty of the relationship we are called into with God and with one another. So we find John telling us today, as he often has through the Gospel, that real life only comes through knowing Jesus in the intimate way that the word 'knowing' meant for the Hebrews. It's all about relationship. Much of the latter half of John's Gospel goes round and round in circles as the author tries to communicate the power of relationship. It uses beautiful words and phrases when reflecting on God's love and the lavishness of that love poured out on the world and on humanity.

John seems to want us to know that when we understand that love, then in time we come to recognise that we are cherished by God with that intimate, wonderful, relationship that many parents have with their children. I came across this quotation from Ronald Rolheiser. He said when reflecting on the relationship between God and God's children, 'God, like any parent, takes a huge risk in having children. To have children is to leave yourself painfully vulnerable. It is also to be called upon for an understanding, a patience, and a self-dethroning that, literally, can empty you of self. That is as true of God as of any mother or father.'

God's love for us has made God vulnerable and needy. It's hard for us to image God in that way, but that's how great God's love is for each one of us. God has emptied Godself for the sake of each human being, whom God loves as if they were the only one. What incredible love that is! We are the recipients of a generous self-giving love that God has for those who have been created. I remember recently going to see a young woman who had given birth to a baby girl. I asked her how she felt, and she said to me 'Everything I have has now been given to another. My life isn't my own any longer.' Everything God has, has been given to us. God's life is no longer God's own. It is an extremely powerful truth. How can we not have value and worth when we are loved in that way? If only we

would believe that life, real life and not just existence, comes through knowing Jesus and, that if we allow God to possess us and envelop us, then we can find life, love and peace. That leads us to live in what John calls the glory of God. So spend time each day inviting God to draw you deeply into relationship and begin to live.

Silent Reflection

Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God
the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.**

Bidding Prayers

There are some Bidding Prayers on the Parish Website for today, or you may like to make your own prayers as an individual or group.

The Lord's Prayer

Concluding Prayer

God our Father,
each person is precious to you.
You are the Giver of life.
Have mercy on us and protect us at this time,
as the coronavirus threatens health and life.
You are an ever-present Helper in time of trouble.
Watch over those who are suffering,
give strength to those who are aiding the sick
and give courage to all in this time of anxiety.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Blessing

May the Lord bless us, keep us from all evil,
and bring us to everlasting life.

R. Amen.

Acknowledgements

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