

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. *Psalm*

Love is fulfilled in everyday life, in attitudes, in deeds.
Pope Francis (Regina Caeli, St Peter's Square, Sunday 6 May 2018)

Let us love one another, since love comes from God. *Second Reading*

'I chose you to go out and to bear fruit.' *Gospel*

Ever-living God,
help us to celebrate our joy
in the resurrection of the Lord
and to express in our lives the love we celebrate.
Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:
Acts 10: 25-26, 34-35, 44-48; Ps. 97 (98); 1 John 4: 7-10; John 15: 9-17



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Sixth Sunday of Easter
Year B, 5th May, 2024

**'As the Father has loved me,
so I have loved you.
Remain in my love.'**

Today's readings centre on the theme of love: the totally faithful, unconditional love of God for us.

The **First Reading** describes a turning point in the growth of the Early Church. Peter visits the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion and Gentile, announcing that 'God does not have favourites'. God reaches out to those who listen to him through his Holy Spirit. He creates a community of love that embraces all humanity.

St John (**Second Reading**) reminds us that God loved us first. God's nature is love. The great depth of that love is revealed in God sending Jesus, whose self-sacrifice redeems our sins and draws us into the life of God.

The **Gospel** shows us Jesus teaching his disciples about his loving relationship with his Father. Jesus chooses and invites us into that same intimate relationship. He tells us how to follow him: that we should love one another.

The **Psalmist** encourages us to sing praise joyfully to the Lord whose love offers salvation to all.

As we approach the end of the Easter season, we pray for the grace that we ourselves might reflect the gift of God's love, through our actions to our brothers and sisters, and to all creation. We also give thanks for the love of our friends, and for the joy that they bring to our lives.



Opening Prayer

Grant, almighty God,
that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion these days of joy,
which we keep in honour of the risen Lord,
and that what we relive in remembrance
we may always hold to in what we do.

First Reading Acts 10: 25–6, 34–5, 44–8

As Peter reached the house Cornelius went out to meet him, knelt at his feet and prostrated himself. But Peter helped him up. ‘Stand up,’ he said ‘I am only a man after all!’

Then Peter addressed them: ‘The truth I have now come to realise’, he said, ‘is that God does not have favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him.’

While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners. Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were all astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured out on the pagans too, since they could hear them speaking strange languages and proclaiming the greatness of God. Peter himself then said, ‘Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now they have received the Holy Spirit just as much as we have?’ He then gave orders for them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterwards they begged him to stay on for some days.

As always, I spend time becoming still. I allow my thoughts to slow down. For a few moments, I simply rest in God’s presence, sensing the tender warmth of his gaze upon me. I take as long as I need; there is no rush.

In time, I slowly read the passage, inviting the Holy Spirit to open my heart and mind. I pause frequently, allowing the words to sink in. What is drawing me? I linger here, pondering how it is touching me.

Maybe I picture myself as a member of Cornelius’s household, or as one of Peter’s companions. What am I noticing? What am I hearing? How is this speaking to me today?

God prepared both Cornelius and Peter for this meeting, leading to the baptism of the first Gentiles. Cornelius sends for Peter, leading Peter to understand that God’s love is for all. I reflect on this.

Do I sometimes struggle to trust that God is all the time preparing me for the next stage of my journey of faith, even though I may not understand where it is leading?

I share with the Lord any feelings and thoughts that arise, and ask for any grace that I need.

I end my prayer slowly, giving thanks: *Glory be ...*

Gospel John 15: 9–17

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete.

This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. No-one can have greater love than to lay down their life for their friends.

You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant does not know their master’s business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father.

You did not choose me: no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; and then the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name.

What I command you is to love one another.’

As I come to pray, I take time to notice my mood ... perhaps joyful, hopeful, uplifted; or burdened, flat, weary, tired, anxious ...? I place all that I bring into God’s loving care.

When I am ready, I turn to the text, reading it several times.

I may like to use my imagination to place myself in the scene, around the table of the Last Supper. I listen carefully as Jesus speaks directly to me.

He has chosen me, and offers me a real relationship of love and friendship. How does it feel to be called and chosen?

Jesus’s plan and desire for me is to experience the joy of his love. Perhaps I recall times when I’ve experienced that joy in giving love and receiving love myself. I share these with the Lord.

Jesus himself gives us the greatest example of love and service. How can I shape my own life to follow Jesus’s example of loving more completely, always seeking the best for others? What grace might I seek?

I may like to end with the prayer of St Richard of Chichester:

*Most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother,
may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.*