

Shellrock Benefice Service Sheet for Easter 7, May 24th 2020

Collect

O God, the king of Glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: we beseech you leave us not comfortless but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the holy spirit one God now and for ever. Amen

Readings

Acts 1: 6-14; Psalm 68, 1-10, 33-36; 1 Peter 4, 12-14 and 5, 6-11; John 17, 1-11

A Reflection

This Sunday falls between two important festivals in the Church: Ascension Day which was on Thursday past, and next Sunday which is Pentecost or Whitsunday as it used to be called when I was a child. We have two more major festivals when we still can't be physically together to reflect on these events in the life of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Over the last few weeks as I've been speaking with people, the strongest sense I have had is that this difficult time, brought about so unexpectedly by a new virus, could be a source of positive change. The worry, and the sadness at lives lost, the physical, psychological, financial and social problems that so many people have experienced throughout this country and the world; despite these things, many are saying that this is an opportunity to think again about how as human beings, communities, societies we wish to live. Hard as it is, it could be a golden opportunity to re-think priorities.

I think this view has been well expressed by the poet Malcolm Guite in this week's Church Times. He writes as follows.

"Such reflection led me, as it has so many others, to wonder whether this crisis might lead us to a chastened, and gentler way of being in the world:

Perhaps in all this crisis, all this pain,
This reassessment of our loss and gain
Nature rebukes our brief authority
Yet offers us the chance to start again

And this time with a new humility,
With chastened awe, and mutual courtesy ;
To re-accept the unearned gift of life
With gratitude, with joy and charity.

Perhaps we'll learn to live without so much
To nurture and to cherish, not to clutch.
And , if I'm spared, I'll hold the years I'm given
With gentle tenure and lighter touch. “

As we look forward to the coming of the Holy Spirit , the breath of new life, the dove of peace , let us pray that we can indeed look forward to “a gentler way of being in the world.”

Suggestions for prayer:

For all nations caught in the grip of a pandemic
For our country and its leaders and the difficult decisions to be made
For all people known to us who are ill at this time
For the bereaved
For those who are risking their lives in the care of others
For ourselves that we may continue to be patient at this difficult time.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, For ever and ever Amen

Blessing

Rejoice this day for Christ has ascended into heaven. Christ has opened the gate of glory, Christ ever prays for us at the right hand of God. And the blessing of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit be with us now and for evermore. Amen