

**DEANERY OF ST EDMUND CAMPION
ENGLISH MARTYRS—
VALE OF THE WHITE HORSE PASTORAL AREA**

www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

www.hundredcatholicparish.org.uk

East Hendred Catholic Parish

Seventh Week of Easter

16th-23rd May 2021



Awaiting Pentecost in the Upper Room

Reflection '*Expectation Sunday*'

TODAY is 'Expectation Sunday', the day when we look forward with some eagerness to next Sunday, the Feast of Pentecost, when we not only celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and the women, gathered in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, but also pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on us, and on the worldwide Church. There have been some splendid Pentecostal events. One I shall never forget personally was the visit of Pope St John Paul to Britain in 1982. I attended an outdoor Mass at Coventry Airport, along with a vast crowd. I was a music teacher in a Catholic school and we all had to camp out the night before, ready for an early start. Unforgettable. I am sure many of us have memories of similarly vivid occasions, whether at Pentecost or not, where the feeling that the Spirit of God is abroad in our midst is palpable.

So, during this Novena of Prayer – these nine days between Ascension Day and Pentecost – it is worth not only redoubling our efforts to live a life of holiness and prayer but also to reflect on what we really would like to ask the Holy Spirit, at work in the world, do for us, to heal our brokenness. Top of everyone's list is the ending of the plague, people held hostage in their own homes by a virus, or lying desperately ill in hospital. We pray for all of this to pass. We see the Holy Spirit at work not just in priests and parishes but in scientists and research labs, doctors, health care workers and hospitals. But, more than that, we have seen unleashed in our midst powerful correctives to some of our way of life. One friend of mine, a retired nuclear physicist, said, it's as if nature has sent us all off to our rooms to think again how we engage with the world. There are some powerful images of an alternative way of doing things. We have seen clear skies, heard bird song, breathed fresh air, discovered an alternative to the trudge of commuting, learned new habits of eating and drinking, new forms of recreation. We have wrestled with living on our own or living at close quarters with others. We have made do with spiritual sustenance packaged in e-mails or live-streamed on Church Services TV.

At the end of this is not just a vaccine or a proven therapy for a new and tiresome virus but a new understanding of the vital contribution made by some of those whom we have not much noticed before: migrant workers, social care workers, porters and cleaners. Also a new understanding of the innate goodness of people. For every spiv or crook, there are a thousand good-hearted folk, eager to volunteer and to help those less fortunate. This outburst of community is the Holy Spirit at work in our world. We want more of all this and, with God's help, we want the world to emerge from the dark shadow of plague into the sunlight of divine blessing. Come, Holy Spirit!

Fr Andrew

SEVENTH WEEK OF EASTER

16th – 23rd May 2021

All masses live-streamed www.churchservices.tv/easthendred
please book for Sunday masses: hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

SEVENTH SUNDAY IN EASTERTIDE

[White]

16th May	9.30am	Parish Mass	(Cel: Fr Martin Flatman)
	6pm	Holy Mass	(Cel: Fr David O'Sullivan)

Monday 17th May - Friday 22nd May

in the Seventh Week of Easter

[White]

No Midweek Masses this week

Saturday 22 nd May	1pm	Nuptial Mass (<i>guests only</i>)	[White]
-------------------------------	-----	-------------------------------------	---------

PENTECOST

[Red]

23rd May	9.30am	Parish Mass	<i>Pro populo</i>
	11.15am	Holy Mass	
	6pm	Holy Mass	

CONTACT DETAILS

Fr Andrew: 01235 835038 or 07976 437979

aburnham@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk is monitored by the Parish Administrator and her Assistant.

East Hendred Catholic Parish

NOTICEBOARD

FR MARTIN FLATMAN AND FR DAVID O'SULLIVAN

We welcome today Fr Martin Flatman to celebrate the 9.30am Mass and Fr David O'Sullivan to celebrate the 6pm Mass. It will be a pleasant change for all of us!

CHURCH SERVICES LIVESTREAM

On Sunday 9th May, there were 264 hits from 76 machines, with 134 remaining on-line long enough to take part in Mass. 56bviewers were from the UK, 17 from Ireland, and 7 from the rest of the world.

BOOKING FOR MASS AT ST MARY'S

Please book for 9.30am, and 6pm Sunday Masses before 12 noon on Fridays hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk On Saturday contact Fr Andrew on aburnham@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk Space limited. Book early. Masks and social distancing required.

PENTECOST 23rd May 2021

Next Sunday is the Feast of Pentecost and there will be an extra Mass -11.15am at St Mary's. We hope very much that people who have felt unable to return to Church, will feel able to come to one of the three masses that Sunday. More details soon.

CHILDREN'S PAGES

- (1) Have you tuned into '**Morning Prayer for Children**', 9am on Sundays? It's ten minutes on Church Services TV.
- (2) **Special stuff for Sunday** 16th May, Seventh Sunday of Easter, follows on the next couple of pages.

ROSARY

The Pope is asking us to join worldwide in the saying of the Rosary each day in May. He will lead the Rosary each day at 6pm (Rome Time), 5pm here. We shall say a daily decade after Mass. The intention is for the ending of the plague and for those who are suffering or caring for the sick. There is a note on the Rosary immediately following the Children's Pages below.



Speak, Lord



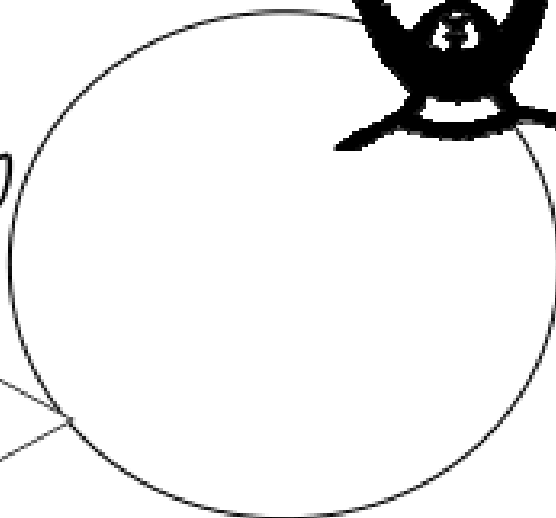
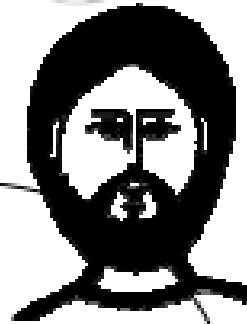
Acts 1:15-17, 20-26
Psalm 102
1 John 4:11-16
John 17:11-19

SUNDAY LITURGY FOR CHILDREN

Year B — 7th Sunday of Easter



JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS FRIENDS



In the circle write the names of some of the friends of Jesus.

Use the code to find out what Jesus said in his prayer:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	
→	←	⇌	↻	↻	↻	↻	↑	↓	↖	↗	↙	↘	↻	↻	▲	▼	△	▽	◀	▶	◀	▶	◀	▶	◀	▶

- I want to (▽↑⇌△⇌) _____ my (↖↗) _____ with you.
- Father, (▲△↑↖⇌⇌◀) _____ them from the (⇌◀↑↖) _____ one.

YEAR B

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Sunday 16th May 2021

The Holy Spirit Comes

John 17: 11-19

Looking up to heaven Jesus said, "Father, now I must return to you and leave these friends behind. I have shared your word with them and watched their faith in you grow when many others chose to doubt. I have watched over them and kept them safe from danger and those who wish them harm. Now I am sending them out into the world, and I ask you to watch over them always and keep them in your care."

Reflection

Sometimes our friends move away to a different part of the country or even different parts of the world. Some people have relatives they may only physically see once or twice in their lifetime.

Saying goodbye to loved one who you know you are not going to see for a long time is sad and there is lots you might want to say to them, but you don't know where to start!

How do you think the apostles felt when they knew Jesus was finally returning to his father? They had grown to love him very much, so much that they were prepared to go out and be witnesses for Christ.

They probably felt sad and a little afraid about what lay ahead of them.

The Holy Spirit gave the apostles the strength and courage they needed for their mission. They knew they were not being left alone but would always be watched over.

Closing Prayer

Lord, I do not feel afraid because you are always with me.

With you beside me there is nothing to fear.

I know that you will protect me from harm and keep me safe.

Amen

The Rosary

The Rosary has five sets of ten beads each preceded by a separate bead. The Our Father is said on the separate bead, a Hail Mary on each of the ten beads, and a Glory be... whilst holding the chain before proceeding to the next separate bead. It is customary to begin, on the short chain, with the Creed (holding the crucifix), an Our Father, three Hail Marys and a Glory be... At the end of the chaplet (set of five mysteries), hold the medal and say the Hail Holy Queen....

The Five Joyful Mysteries (Monday and Saturday)

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | The Annunciation | <i>Luke 1:26-38</i> |
| 2 | The Visitation | <i>Luke 1:39-46</i> |
| 3 | The Nativity | <i>Luke 2:1-7</i> |
| 4 | The Presentation | <i>Luke 2:22-32</i> |
| 5 | The Finding in the Temple | <i>Luke 2:42-52</i> |

The Five Sorrowful Mysteries (Tuesday and Friday)

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | The Agony in the Garden | <i>Mark 14:32-38</i> |
| 2 | The Scourging at the Pillar | <i>John 18:33 – 19:1</i> |
| 3 | The Crowning with Thorns | <i>Mark 15:16-20</i> |
| 4 | The Carrying of the Cross | <i>Matthew 27:31-34</i> |
| 5 | The Crucifixion | <i>Luke 23:33-48</i> |

The Five Luminous Mysteries (Thursday)

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | The Baptism in the Jordan | <i>Matthew 3:13-17</i> |
| 2 | The Wedding at Cana | <i>John 2:1-12</i> |
| 3 | The Proclamation of the Kingdom | <i>Luke 4:14-21</i> |
| 4 | The Transfiguration | <i>Mark 9:2-8</i> |
| 5 | The Institution of the Eucharist | <i>1 Corinthians 11:23-26</i> |

The Five Glorious Mysteries (Wednesday and Sunday)

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | The Resurrection | <i>Luke 24:1-6</i> |
| 2 | The Ascension | <i>Luke 24:50-53</i> |
| 3 | The Gift of the Holy Spirit | <i>Acts 2:1-4</i> |
| 4 | The Assumption of Our Lady | <i>1 Corinthians 15:20-26</i> |
| 5 | The Coronation of Our Lady and the Glory of the Saints | <i>Revelation 12:1-6</i> |

HAIL HOLY QUEEN, Mother of mercy! Hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we lift up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

CHARITY

Didcot

To help with supplying the Didcot Foodbank, contact Veronica Paget: veronicapaget@hotmail.com or leave suitable food outside her front door.

Wantage

Jackymattam@btinternet.com helps with the poor locally. Contact her about what practical help she needs. It is usually children's clothes, push chairs &c.

Annie@thehilltribe.com is collecting scarves (for headcovering), socks for men, women, and children, and suitcases to take all this to Afghanistan.

TEA TALKS

Oxford Playhouse – our local contact is Jo Noble – is organising Tea Talks, bringing people together in difficult times with a cup of tea and a weekly chat. This began in May and continues through June and is open to everyone over 60. (It's in partnership with Age UK). There will be a further project in the Autumn.

To take part in this free initiative, please contact Beth Sedgwick on 01865 305346 or e-mail community@oxfordplayhouse.com

GIVING TO THE PARISH BY REGULAR STANDING ORDER OR GIFT

BANK DETAILS: PRCDTR East Hendred, St Mary

Sort Code: 309304 Account Number: 00877183

To arrange Gift Aid, contact : hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

A donation to the parish may be made on
www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

HOLY FATHER'S MAY PRAYER INTENTION

Let us pray that those in charge of finance will work with governments to regulate the financial sphere and protect citizens from its dangers.

FIRST COMMUNION GROUPS

Pray for children who have just begun First Communion Preparation through St Amand's School: Felicity, Keeleigh, Elijah, Anna, Eamonn, Luca, Mia, Isobel, Julia, Stephen, Thomas. Pray also for George and Toby from Hendreds Primary School, undertaking preparation with Mary Harrison.

THE SICK AND THOSE IN NEED

Baby Martha, John Castle, Petal Connell, Daniel Cuevas, John Stringer, Louise Woodhouse, Sr Catherine, Mary Wallace, Brenda Paddon, Angus Clark, Karen Greig, Kitty Teasdale, Mary McNichol, Andrew Gunn, Elizabeth Gunn, Des McNichol, Christine Robinson, Rose

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Week 16th-22nd May: Harold Davies, Frances Smith, John Joseph Wallington, Sybil Olive Foster.

.

CARMELITE CONFERENCES

Scripture and Spirituality Conferences are run from Carmelite Friary on Boar's Hill (which has been local to us and will be again once we get beyond the Zoom-only stage).

Key dates at present are 10th-11th July for a Conference on St John of the Cross and 7pm on 11th July for an event called 'Teresa's Four Waters in Word, Image, and Song'.

Booking for these events by 15th May attracts a 10% discount for those who quote the reference SSC10.

For further details, contact: ruth.preston@carmelite.org.uk

East Hendred Catholic Parish



**The Seventh Sunday
of Easter (B)**

16th May 2021

Antiphons,

Prayers and

Readings

Entrance Antiphon

Exaudi, Domine (cf Ps 27:7-9)

O Lord, hear my voice, for I have called to you: of you my heart has spoken,
Seek his face: hide not your face from me, alleluia!

Collect

Graciously hear our supplications, O Lord, so that we, who believe that the Saviour of the human race is with you in glory, may experience, as he promised, until the end of the world, his abiding presence among us. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever

First Reading

Acts 1:15-17, 20-26(RSV)

¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among the brethren (the company of persons was in all about a hundred and twenty), and said, ¹⁶'Brethren, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David, concerning Judas who was guide to those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷For he was numbered among us, and was allotted his share in this ministry...²⁰For it is written in the book of Psalms,

"Let his habitation become desolate,
and let there be no one to live in it"; and
"His office let another take."

²¹So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.' ²³And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsab'bas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthi'as. ²⁴And they prayed and said, 'Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take the place in this ministry and

apostleship from which Judas turned aside, to go to his own place.” ²⁶ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthi’as; and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles.

Psalm 103: 1-4, 11-12, 19-20 **R/19**

R/ The Lord has fixed his throne in heav’n.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me, his holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and never forget all his benefits. **R/**

For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So strong his mercy for those who fear him.
As far as the east is from the west
so far from us does he remove our transgressions. **R/**

The Lord has fixed his throne in heav’n,
and his kingdom is ruling over all.
Bless the Lord, all you his angels,
mighty in power, fulfilling his word,
who heed the voice of his word. **R/**

Second Reading

1 John 4:11-16 (RSV)

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, **alleluia.**

I will not leave you orphans, says *the* Lord:

I will come back to you, and your hearts will be full of joy.

R/ Alleluia, alleluia.

Scripture Reading (Easter Week 7)

Monday Acts 19:1-8 John 16:29-33

Tuesday Acts 20:17-27 John 17:1-11

Wednesday Acts 20:28-38 John 17:11-19

Thursday Acts 22:30; 23:6-11 John 17:20-26

Friday Acts 25:13-21 John 21:15-19

Saturday Acts 28:16-20, 30-31 John 21:20-25

PENTECOST (B) Acts 2:1-11

Galatians 5:16-25

John 15:26-27; 16:12-13

Ant.
6.
R E-gí-na cæli * læ-tá-re, alle-lú-ia: Qui a
quem me-ru-ísti portá-re, alle-lú-ia: Re-surréx-it,
si-cut dix-it, alle-lú-ia: Ora pro no-bis De-um,
alle-lú-ia.

Joy to thee, O Queen of heaven, alleluia.
he whom thou wast meet to bear, alleluia.
as he promised hath arisen, alleluia.
pour for us to God thy prayer, alleluia.

V/ Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia:
R/ for the Lord has risen indeed, alleluia.

Revised Standard Version Bible, Ignatius Edition, copyright © 2006, by the Division of Christian Education, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA.

The Revised Grail Psalms Copyright © 2010, Conception Abbey/The Grail, administered by GIA Publications, Inc., www.giamusic.com All rights reserved.

The English translation and chants of the Roman Missal © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation. All rights reserved.

FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

17th – 21st May 2021

Though there are no Midweek Masses this week, there is a reading and reflection here for each day.

Collect for the Week

Graciously hear our supplications, O Lord, so that we, who believe that the Saviour of the human race is with you in glory, may experience, as he promised, until the end of the world, his abiding presence among us. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever

Monday in the Seventh Week of Easter

after the Ascension of the Lord

17th May 2021

Reading

Acts 19:1-8 (RSV)

While Apol'los was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ² And he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said, 'No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' ³ And he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They said, 'Into John's baptism.' ⁴ And Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.' ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. ⁷ There were about twelve of them in all.

⁸ And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God.

Reflection

THE SECOND half of the Acts of the Apostles is really the story of St Paul, his missionary journeys, and his eventual arrest and final journey to Rome. We must take the Gospel of St Luke and the Book of Acts as a two-part work (the opening of Acts says as much). The two halves – St Luke’s Gospel - represent the journey of a rabbi from Galilee to his arrest and death in Jerusalem, the centre of the Jewish world, and – the Acts of the Apostles - the journey of St Paul and the Apostolic Church from Jerusalem to Rome, the centre of the known world, the Gentile world.

In Acts 19 – this morning’s first reading – we find Paul in Ephesus. We are still very much as the Jewish stage of the Christian mission in that Paul’s preaching during his three-month stay in Ephesus is based in the synagogue there, amongst the Jews of the diaspora.

The information we are given is intriguing: there are disciples here who have undergone the baptism of repentance, as preached by John the Baptist, but have yet to experience the Holy Spirit. Indeed they are not aware that there is a ‘Holy Spirit’. When they hear Paul proclaim the Gospel, they are moved to be baptised in the name of Jesus, and to receive the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. These gifts include the gift of prophecy and the gift of speaking in tongues – gifts which will be all too prominent as we reflect in the coming days on the promise of Pentecost.

Tuesday in the Seventh Week of Easter

after the Ascension of the Lord

18th May

Reading

Acts 20:17-27 (RSV)

Paul’s Journey to Jerusalem

¹⁷ From Mile’tus Paul sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them:

`You yourselves know how I lived among you all the time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which befell me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, bound in the Spirit, not knowing what shall befall me there; ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that all you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will see my face no more. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Reflection

SOME commentators refer to this passage – and its continuation tomorrow – as St Paul’s ‘Final Discourse’. Before the final events set out in the Acts of the Apostles – appearances before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, the eventful sea voyage and shipwreck on Malta, and the journey to Rome – Paul sets out his testament to the elders of the Church in Ephesus. Such a ‘testament’ or ‘Final Discourse’ was a literary convention of the time, and we find it in both Jewish and pagan sources. The point of the ‘Final Discourse’ is partly to give an account of oneself – put one’s case – and partly an opportunity to give instruction to others – disciples, followers, listeners, readers. But St Luke is not giving us anything formulaic: in the Book of Acts he gives significant speeches to Stephen and Peter as well as to Paul, and each is very different and expresses distinctive personalities and circumstances. Today’s passage explains why Paul feels he must go to Jerusalem, an explanation which gives him the opportunity to give an account of himself, his ministry, mission, and motives.

Wednesday in the Seventh Week of Easter

after the Ascension of the Lord

19th May

Reading

Acts 20:28-38 (RSV)

Paul addresses the Church in Ephesus

²⁸ Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

³⁶ And when he had spoken thus, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And they all wept and embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸ sorrowing most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they brought him to the ship.

Reflection

PAUL'S 'Final Discourse', which we began yesterday and continued today, was his last meeting with the Church in Ephesus. They knew that it was the last they would see of Paul, about to be on his way to Rome, to claim his privilege under the law as a Roman Citizen. He includes a saying of Jesus – 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'. It is not a strange thing for Jesus to have said. The strange thing is that we don't find it in the Gospels, so there is no other record of him saying it. Paul is concerned to remind the Church that he was self-supporting in his ministry and particularly concerned for the weak. He warns them of what may come

afterwards, as fierce wolves will attack them, not sparing the flock. Everyone in Christian ministry – and St Paul is no exception – is always aware, and somewhat concerned, that those who follow on may not maintain what has been established. It is, however, part of the vitality of the Church that every new bishop, every new priest, every new baptised member of the flock will bring change. As someone said to me recently, about something entirely different, the only constant thing is change.

Thursday in the Seventh Week of Easter

after the Ascension of the Lord

20th May

Reading

Acts 22:30; 23:6-11 (RSV)

On the morrow, desiring to know the real reason why the Jews accused Paul, the tribune unbound him, and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them...

¶But when Paul perceived that one part were Sad'ducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, 'Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead I am on trial.' ¶And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sad'ducees; and the assembly was divided. ¶For the Sad'ducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. ¶Then a great clamour arose; and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party stood up and contended, 'We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?' ¶And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them and bring him into the barracks.

¶The following night the Lord stood by him and said, 'Take courage, for as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also at Rome.'

Reflection

WE ARE heading for the climax of the Acts of the Apostles. Paul, arrested because of the agitation of the Jewish leaders, is hauled before the Sanhedrin. St Luke's mention of the Sanhedrin here reminds us of the trial of Jesus. This high-ranking court has proved itself twice over to be an

undisciplined rabble. Similarly, St Luke does not highly rate the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees believe some of the right things but come to the wrong conclusion. The Sadducees, whom he mentions just once, are simply wrong. Paul noticed – and took advantage of – the differences between Pharisees (of which Paul had been one himself before his conversion) and the Sadducees. Pharisees believed in life after death and Sadducees didn't. Unsurprisingly, when he explains himself, Paul elicits some support from the Pharisees. 'What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?', they say. The quarrel turned violent and the tribune ordered that Paul be taken to the barracks. Earlier we had seen Paul claiming to be by birth a Roman citizen and those who could say 'Cives Romanus sum' – I am a Roman citizen – had particular rights. One right was to be tried for crimes in front of the Roman Emperor, which led to Paul being taken off to Rome.

It is hard to read St Luke – the Gospel as well as the Acts of the Apostles – without being struck by some of the difficulties the Christian mission faced. Leaving aside the fundamental fact of the Crucifixion of Jesus, a fact which St Paul calls 'a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles' (1 Cor 1:23), we see the new Christian movement, inspired by the Holy Spirit, nonetheless meeting some real obstacles. Chief of these is the lack of headway the Gospel makes with Israel, God's own people. We have a series of setbacks: the martyrdom of the new deacon, Stephen (Acts 7); the martyrdom of James and the imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12); the uproar in Thessalonica (Acts 17); the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19); the arrest of Paul and the shipwreck on Malta, en route for Rome (Acts 27). The final difficulty – the beheading of Paul – is after the Book of Acts has ended. All we have is a final verse that tells us that Paul lived in Rome for 'two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered' (Acts 28:30). The pattern of setbacks and suffering features throughout Christian history. The victory of the Gospel is a triumph indeed but it is a triumph amidst adversity.

Friday in the Seventh Week of Easter

after the Ascension of the Lord

21st May

Reading

John 21:15-25 (RSV)

Peter is given Pastoral Charge

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' ¹⁶ A second time he said to him, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.' ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.) And after this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

Jesus and the Beloved Disciple

²⁰ Peter turned and saw following them the disciple whom Jesus loved, who had lain close to his breast at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?' ²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about this man?' ²² Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!' ²³ The saying spread abroad among the brethren that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?'

²⁴ This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true.

²⁵ But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

Reflection

HAVING spent quite some time in the Easter season with the Acts of the Apostles and St John's Gospel, we would reach the end of both books on Saturday. Accordingly, I have extended today's Gospel to give us the final verses of St John. (If you want to finish off Acts, the Saturday passage begins at 28:16.) I have chosen today to reflect on the Gospel, partly because the scene was set on Thursday's reading from Acts for Paul's departure for Rome, and though we hear of a shipwreck on the way on the Island of Malta and of his house arrest in Rome for a couple of years, we don't hear from Acts about his execution. In that sense, we have less than the full story.

We don't quite hear from St John's Gospel what eventually happens to Peter and John, the Beloved Disciple. We hear in today's Gospel that Peter who denied knowing his Lord three times after Jesus was arrested is three times given chance to profess his love and devotion, and three times is given a commission to care for the sheep and lambs of God's pasture. We also hear implicitly that Peter will suffer martyrdom: "When you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go." (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.)' We find out later that Peter was crucified under Nero in between AD 64 and AD 68. The tradition is that the execution took place at what is now called St Peter's Square: the spot is mark by an Egyptian obelisk, 25 metres high, erected in 1586. The grave of Peter is deep below St Peter's Basilica.

Peter and Paul were martyred at about the same time. Peter was crucified, apparently upside down, but Paul, the Roman citizen, had the right be beheaded, a death no doubt much quicker and more dignified. We find Peter enquiring of Jesus what will happen to the Beloved Disciple. The slightly enigmatic reply - 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!' - led many to speculate that John would not see death. This, says the Evangelist, was not accurate, but John's natural death showed us that it is not only martyrs who are saints.

✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘