

OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH

HOMILY FOR THE ASCENSION

28TH MAY 2017

In the style of St Luke, I'd like to remind us of some of the important things we have heard over this period of Eastertide. This is for all of us, as we easily forget things, with a particular encouragement for those here who are, shall I say, a bit hit and miss when it comes to being at Mass. We miss you when you're not here, look at our crucifix, because more importantly He misses you – and it really is good to be here developing friendships and simply put; being in God's presence.

So, let's recap. Jesus was born in difficult times in a foreign land, his parents followed God's instructions where to live and he grew up the son of a carpenter. When he was about 30yrs old he was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power; he went about doing good, curing those who had fallen into the power of the devil. He was condemned to die and suffered the cruelty of crucifixion. He chose to accept this; he went through immense physical and emotional pain for you and me. Our wrongs are forgiven because of what he did for us. He conquered death so that you and I could join him for eternity in heaven. There were many, many witnesses to this. They knew these truths in their heart. They worked miracles and signs and demonstrated that Jesus is God. At times they got discouraged, such as the disciples walking to Emmaus, and Jesus appeared to them and when he broke the bread and blessed it (our Eucharist) they recognised him. And were filled with joy! Truly, in the midst of good or harsh, hard times, whenever we meet and recognise Jesus we can be filled with joy.

Indeed, we heard Jesus' words that he has come to give us life in its fullness. And simply, Jesus told us we must trust in God and trust in him (which in a mysterious way can help us be at peace)

People everywhere accepted the Word of God and were baptised. Some had only been baptised with water so the disciples laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Friends, last week Bishop Mark laid hands on Josh, Julia, Shyla, Amelia, Christine, and prayed for the fullness of the Holy Spirit upon them. You five children have an exciting time ahead! And last week Geoffrey reminded us that the Holy Spirit is with us wherever we are.

Today, this feast of his ascension, we heard that Jesus told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received this same Spirit. And just as he spoke to them 2000 years ago, he speaks to us here and now.

Jesus ascended into the sky and the disciples stood there staring upwards. Two angels appeared and in effect told them don't just stand there, get on and do what Jesus has instructed. What does this mean for us today? Jesus told them to wait and pray together until they received the Holy Spirit, and that they must go and make disciples of the world.

Well, I'm no angel! Sadly, I don't radiate love how Jesus did, and for that I ask you forgive me. However, in my own way I am trying; and all I ask you on behalf of Jesus, in your own ways to try and intentionally radiate God's love. Several people have expressed to me that they are doing as much as they can, and listening to their stories of life I really know this is true. You are exhibiting love within and through your difficulties. However, for many of us, we can try to crank up our love levels; and to do this it helps if we "soak ourselves" in God.

We have one week until Pentecost; we can do our own mini Novena, in a way that's what Mary and the disciples did. We can dedicate ourselves to some short focussed prayer every day between now and then – why not team up with somebody? With intention, ask the Holy Spirit every day to come into our lives. This Holy Spirit will give us power. He will give us an inner certainty. He will give us what we need to be a disciple, and go and make disciples. To tell or show everyone we can what Jesus has done and how we should live. And so I say to you; believe Jesus when he said "I will always be with you"

This parish community is amazing; visitors repeatedly say that. This reflects not just what people do, but what you are; and you are great.

Today's homily is on the church website, and I list at the end just some of the ways we can be involved. Thank you so much to those who already are involved; to those who aren't – start! It's good for us to be part of each other's' lives. God will strengthen you, draw you closer to him and each other; you'll also start experiencing the Holy Spirit working in you. And that is an experience for everyone!

Like the early disciples, we want others to say, "Look at those Christians, look how much they love each other".

Let's finish with some reflections from Pope Francis. EG77 "Today we are seeing in many pastoral workers an inordinate concern for their personal freedom and relaxation.... The spiritual life comes to be identified with a few religious exercises which can offer a certain comfort but which do not encourage encounter with others, engagement with the world or a passion for evangelisation.

EG81 Lay people fear they may be asked to undertake some apostolic work and they seek to avoid any responsibility that may take away their free time.....as if the task of evangelisation was a dangerous poison chalice rather than a joyful response to God's love which summons us to mission and makes us fulfilled and productive"

EG120 In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the people of God have become missionary disciples.(Matt28.19)...What are we waiting for?

So, our Pope is indeed asking us to check our hearts and priorities; what or who are we putting first in our lives? However and most importantly he is reminding us that responding to God is a joyful experience; whatever time we give up for God he will give us such wonderful graces that we will wonder why we didn't start sooner! Check out what is available on the website.

EG151 What is essential is that we are certain that God loves us, that Jesus Christ has saved us, and that his love always has the last word.

So, I'll finish with an expression of Jesus love. This is a truly loving and caring parish. You are a wonderful group of people. For the brief period of one week, reflect on what Jesus did for you. He died for you so you have an inheritance in heaven; he is now in heaven praying for you! How good is that! Spend some time every day following the disciples' example and pray for the Holy Spirit to come into your lives. Know that you are loved beyond measure. Know also that Jesus wants you and me to show him to others. And he will help because he is always, always with you; right at your side.

(Let's grow together in our love of God, and in our common mission of showing this love to everyone here, and importantly to everyone who isn't here.)

These are just some of the opportunities available.

Volunteer at the Life shop

Volunteer at the Lantern (I had great fun doing this for a few years)

Join the parish visiting team

Help with the fete, the One World group

Try out one of the Bible sharing groups, the various prayer groups

Join the cleaning teams, the flower arrangers, the gardeners, CWL.

Help with the counting, the forthcoming Alpha course.

Become a Eucharistic minister.

Pray.

Rev Jonathan de Kretser