

## Sixth Sunday of Easter

Prayers, Readings, Reflection and Song.

“Welcome to another short act of worship for the Parish Church of St Martin. For those who are able to follow it as written or listen in, I hope it offers some comfort, encouragement and a sense of being together despite the distance between us.” Rev Jonny



*Be still, and draw yourself closer to the God who rests beside you, before you and within you.*

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**All Amen.**

The Lord be with you  
**All and also with you.**

Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
**All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

The sun of righteousness has dawned with healing in his wings. Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith

**All God our Father,  
long-suffering, full of grace and truth,  
you create us from nothing and give us life.  
You give your faithful people new life in the water  
of baptism.  
You do not turn your face from us, nor cast us aside.  
We confess that we have sinned  
against you and our neighbour.  
We have wounded your love and marred your image in  
us.  
Restore us for the sake of your Son,  
and bring us to heavenly joy,  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

God promises us a place with him for ever and he has raised us to new life in Jesus Christ our Lord. May we know his forgiveness and peace and the freedom to serve him in newness of life.

**All Amen**

*The Collect for the day*

God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever

*All* **Amen.**

**THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

*The Gospel, John 14:15-21*

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

*All sing* **Praise to you O Christ.**

## *Reflection*

Jesus promises his followers that His father, God, will send us the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit. What is the Holy Spirit?

So much ink has been spilt over this question. Who or what is the Holy Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit God? Is it a part of God? How does it relate to God the father and God the Son? Do we have three Gods: Father Son and Holy Spirit? Such vexed questions – many of which have (at one time or another) caused massive splits within the church.

I am not going to try and answer these questions now. And that is because I do not feel that these questions (these *what* questions) are the best starting point to understand the Holy Spirit. Far better, I think, to start with the question of *how*.

-How do we know the Holy Spirit?

- How do we experience its power?

- How has it affected our lives; as individuals and as a church?

Asking how gives us a much more tangible understanding of something like this than ever asking what. Just think of love. I could ask you what love is. But you wouldn't get very far in your answer before you began to tell me how love made you feel; how love had influenced your life; how love has made you who you are.

In a couple of weeks' time we shall be remembering the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon (and welled-up within) the earliest followers of Jesus. From that moment they were empowered as a church to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and to teach and heal and baptise in His name.

Again, we could spend a lot of time thinking about what was happening there; but far more fruitful I think to look at how that moment shaped the lives of the disciples and the history of the church. Thinkers have often wondered how this little band of believers came to grow in the years following the death of their leader Jesus. What are the chances of a small and powerless community

flourishing so amazingly as those early Christians did? Without their central leader; in an occupied and oppressed land; with a message of humility and sacrifice; with no weapons or strength other than the Gospel of love; surrounded by other long established religious traditions; prevailing against the influence of Greek philosophical culture. How, how, how?

How else, but by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Luck? Timing? Canny politics? Charismatic leadership? Maybe a little bit of each of those. But for this traumatised gang of fishermen and tradesmen, of outcast women and illiterate slaves, to bring hundreds and then thousands and now billions of believers to a faith in Jesus Christ is the mark of some other incredible power. I believe this is the power of the Holy Spirit working amongst and within us – the Church.

But what about our own lives? How has the Holy Spirit been at work in you and me?

I wonder if we are sometimes a little too reserved in speaking about how the Holy Spirit moves in our lives. Perhaps we think that the Holy Spirit is more the preserve of the charismatic church; one for the evangelicals and the enthusiasts, but not for likes of us. When all is said and done, the Holy Spirit just isn't very British. Nonsense!

The Holy Spirit is just as real and involved in our lives in Jersey, as it ever was in Rio de Janeiro or Johannesburg or Jerusalem. The up-welling power of the Holy Spirit doesn't care for postcodes or cultural stereotypes – it is as universal as God Himself, because it is God Himself. So if you ever feel that Spirit moving within you – that powerful urge to laugh or cry or sing or just be indescribably still – don't be afraid to call it for what it is, and give thanks for the Holy Spirit working in your life.

Of course, it isn't always that dramatic. In fact, I'm sure I speak for many of us when I say there are times when the Holy Spirit just seems so incredibly distant. When our doubts weigh us down; when our prayer life comes to a juddering stop; when our capacity to love seems all dried up. Moments – maybe even years - of desolation.

But have faith. Because as St Paul writes in his Letter to the Romans, **“the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit prays for us with sighs too deep for words.”**

I often find these the most comforting words in Scripture. The Holy Spirit – the advocate that Jesus promised us – is praying for us, always, with sighs too deep for words. The Holy Spirit knows, better than ourselves, the very prayers we need, and the Holy Spirit prays them with a sigh too deep for words to our God who hears every syllable.

What a gift that is for all who believe. So, have faith, be assured, the Holy Spirit works in the most inconceivable ways to invite us into God’s loving embrace.

Amen.

### *Song*

**Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire  
and lighten with celestial fire;  
thou the anointing Spirit art,  
who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.**

**Thy blessed unction from above  
is comfort, life, and fire of love;  
enable with perpetual light  
the dullness of our mortal sight.**

**Anoint and cheer our soil’ed face  
With the abundance of thy grace:  
Keep far our foes, give peace at home;  
Where thou art guide no ill can come.**

**Show us the Father and the Son,  
in thee and with thee, ever one;  
that through the ages all along  
this may be our unending song:**

**Praise to thine eternal merit,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.**

*Prayers of Intercession*

*Pray for one another – those in our church community*

*Pray for the Parish, the Island and the World*

*Pray for the sick, the isolated, the anxious and depressed*

*Pray for the dying, and those who mourn*

*Pray for yourselves, and for your own needs*

Lord in your mercy

**All Hear our prayer**

*The Intercessions may end as follows*

Merciful Father

**All Accept these prayers**

**for the sake of your son,**

**our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen**

*The Peace*

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said, 'Peace be with you.'

Then were they glad when they saw the Lord. Alleluia.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**All and also with you.**

Let us pray with confidence, as our Saviour taught us

**All 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.**

*The Blessing.*

God the Father,

by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead,

strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life;

and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and

the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always

*All* **Amen.**

Go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia! Alleluia!

*All* **Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!**





ASTER