

Fr James' homily for the Seventh Sunday of Easter 2021



First Reading: Acts of the Apostles 1: 15-16
Second Reading: First Letter of St John 4: 11-16
Gospel: John 17: 11-19

St John says it all today in his First Letter: *"We can know we are living in him and he is living in us because he lets us share his spirit"*. Once more he repeats his basic revelation: God is love. We have come to the end of that period of the year when in our worship we remember what is meaning of the incarnation - why did God become human in Christ Jesus?? The purpose is that we might be able to share the life of God in a new and definitive way.

So in the Gospel today we have an awesome front row seat to see inside the life of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We witness Father and Son in intimate conversation, and the power between them is the spirit. Jesus says that he and the Father are one, and prays that we may be too.

In these last days of Easter let us pray first that we may be one. Division is a shame. It is a sin, always. Division is the very definition of the diabolic. The greatest scandal of the Church is that we are divided. But so too starting on the personal level, the ways I am divided against myself by my falling into sin are a scandal. The ways we are divided in relationships is the same etc etc. God intends it otherwise. A good and pious practice at the end of the day is to ask myself how today did I help bring things together and not cause division, and to ask the Holy Spirit into that.

Then the Gospel once more talks about the difference between belonging to the world and belonging to God. Remember the real meaning here: Not that physical things are bad and spiritual things are good, but that there is a kingdom to bring into all physical and spiritual things alike. The world of self-absorption, lies, violence of every kind and of illusion that so tempts us will always angrily attack all our attempts to do what is right.

We know from the media and the powers that be that our faith is always under attack from the prevailing culture. The scandal is when we make it easy for that to happen. Why did God become man? The Gospel says "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world..." Jesus asks that, because of his death and resurrection, we be in the world, for the world, not separate from it but a means to enable all the world to be gathered into one, the one life of God and the one truth of God. The example of a monastery works well here - a gathered distinct community, but one rooted in what surrounds it, to be a resource and source of hope and healing.

Just as Churchill is revered for saying “I have nothing to offer you but blood sweat and tears...” or such words, so we say: Follow Jesus and you won’t know a moment’s peace, as the world would have it. You will know peace beyond understanding and joy unknown and unlooked for. Because you will have privileged access to the truth, who is Jesus the Way, the Truth and the Life. Truth is not a popular word in the “world”, in fact “truth” has become a matter of opinion and feeling - me against you. In other words it has become division and division always makes us sad. The risen Jesus, however, is always about removing divisions, and that is joy. In these last days of Easter, let us look for the joy of knowing Jesus.

Amen.

Fr James and Fr Tom wish you a blessed Sunday. Keep safe and well, and never hesitate to pick up the telephone and be in touch. See you in church I hope! Keep in close contact with the website for news of how practical plans are developing.