

Seventh Sunday of Easter - Fr Gerry O'Shaughnessy sdb

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In our gospel today we see Jesus reflecting on friendship; the disciples have 'lost' Jesus again and they need that sense of connection. Jesus prays '**Father keep those you have given me true to your name**'; this time before Pentecost sees the apostles still in lockdown. The virus of fear is still in their lives and in these days they need to know the support of their friend Jesus: 'I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them.' I feel that this is Jesus' prayer for each of us in these new times, as we have emerged from the hurt of a dark pandemic. Each of us are in the business of protecting others: we need to look out for each other, using simple examples of that care.

The early Church of the Upper Room, is a Church of lockdown - a Church founded in the fear. Paradoxically, we can find strength in that weakness. These difficult times has helped us to understand where our real strengths can be found: we have been forced to draw on reservoirs of strength that we probably never knew we had. We have been there for friends in their ups and downs of life - it is a real rollercoaster experience. I just pray that there have been people there for you when you have been at your lowest; that you have had family or friends to lift you up, even if was over a FaceTime call from thousands of miles away.

It has been said that a real casualty of the pandemic has been our faith in the truth. We have been let down by politicians, family, friends and, some of us, feel let down by our Church. We have been told officially that we need to listen to 'alternative facts' but the commandments make it very clear that lying is wrong however we try to wrap it up. Jesus wants us to be a Church of truth. Jesus commends his disciples in the gospel, '**for their sake I consecrate myself, so that they too may be consecrated in truth.**' Today is a challenge to each of us to stand up for the integrity of the truth. In keeping true to the Word of God we make our little bit of the world safe and free from the virus of lies and hurt. We are all involved in '**passing on the Word**' during this coming week: it will not always be easy, but we can face up to the challenge. We can find God in the little and ordinary; like Jesus, we will find truth and real faith on the edges. I urge you to find Jesus in those things that will enable us to 'share (Jesus') joy to the full':

The word of God constantly shows us how God challenges those who believe in him “to go forth”. Abraham receives the call to set out for a new land (cf. Genesis 12:1-3). Moses heard God’s call: “Go, I send you” (Exodus 3:10) and led the people towards the promised land (cf. Exodus 3:17). To Jeremiah God says: “To all whom I send you, you shall go” (Jeremiah 1:7). In our day Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples” echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in the new missionary “going forth”. Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone to reach the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel.

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