

## The Seventh Sunday of Easter

*Father glorify your Son*

*Let him give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him*

Dear parishioners,

The days between the Feast of the Ascension (last Thursday) and the Feast of Pentecost (next Sunday) have a special focus and significance; these days are days of novena to the Holy Spirit for all of us.

At the Ascension Jesus gave to his followers what sounds like 'mission impossible',

*Go make disciples of all the nations*

How could a small band of disciples realise what to us seems unrealistic, unbelievable and beyond human capacity? When something appears to us beyond the realms of probability, we often laugh. For instance, when St. Paul proclaimed the Resurrection to the Athenians, some burst out laughing. However, the disciples did not do so when Jesus spoke those words *Go make disciples of all the nations!* They knew already that they were not alone, for Jesus had promised he would not leave them orphans but would be with them until the end of time, and that he had also promised to send the Holy Spirit. Entrusted, then, with Our Lord's own mission, the first thing the disciples did was to pray.

In the First Reading for mass this Sunday, taken from *The Acts of the Apostles*, this scene of prayer is described. The venue is an upper room where they were staying, and gathered together are the Apostles and several women, including Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and some of Jesus' relations amongst his extended family. All these joined in continuous prayer. This is an image of believers united in prayer, bound in fellowship, awaiting God's action and the coming of the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the disciples did not laugh at 'mission impossible', but believed what is impossible to man is possible for God. This was something Mary had learned herself at the Annunciation when the angel declared *The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you*. Who knows, but perhaps in

the course of these days of deep prayer Mary recalled for the disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit at her own conception of Christ, for at Pentecost, the Church, now conceived in believers, was to come to birth.

This scene of the disciples gathered in prayer and awaiting the Holy Spirit is one we should keep before our minds. It is an authentic image of the Church gathered as one around the Lord, in the Holy Spirit, turned to the Father, but directed to the salvation of the world in mission. Prayer is not just about 'asking', but about 'being' in the presence of God and sharing the divine life. In the Gospel Reading, from St. John, Jesus says,

***Let him give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him***

Prayer helps remind us that God had created us principally as spiritual beings capable of receiving and living the life of God. Indeed, at the beginning, God breathed life into us and so made us living beings. Now the Holy Spirit seeks to come and dwell within us and bring us into communion. As a practical suggestion, it can be helpful to say hymns to the Holy Spirit as payers during these days of novena.

Fr Anthony