

Sixth Sunday of Easter 2020

Gospel: St John 14. 15-21

BCP: Beginning of the
Gospel for Whitsunday

Father Mark writes:

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus prepares his disciples for the time that he will leave them.

We read of Jesus saying, 'I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever, that Spirit of truth'.

Well ahead of the Last Supper, his betrayal, arrest and crucifixion, Jesus is seen equipping his disciples for a time of

expectant waiting, bolstering them up and setting in motion the task of spreading the Gospel message throughout the known world.

Today is the Sixth Sunday of Easter and has traditionally been known as Rogation Sunday.

Rogation Days are days of prayer and fasting in Western Christianity. They are observed with processions and the Litany of the Saints. The Monday to Wednesday preceding the Ascension Day are traditionally known as Rogation Days. The word rogation comes from the Latin verb *rogare*, meaning 'to ask', which reflects the

beseeking of God for the appeasement of his anger and for protection from calamities. In earlier times we asked God particularly for good harvests and gave thanks for the fruits of the earth.

Rogation Sunday and the three days following are days which were traditionally centred on prayer. More recently we have identified the days between Ascension Day and the feast of Pentecost as being a particular time of prayer for the Christian community.

Thy Kingdom Come

During this time, we seek to discern the new kingdom and await the coming of a new Jerusalem. We continue to pray as Jesus taught us to pray – ‘Thy kingdom come’. As in the past few years, we will once more pray ‘thy kingdom come’ with Christians across the world as we keep the novena of prayer between Ascension Day and the Feast of Pentecost.

Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray for more people to come to know Jesus. What started in 2016 as an invitation from the Archbishops of

Canterbury and York to the Church of England, has grown into an international and ecumenical call to prayer.

It is hoped that during this time of prayer, everyone who takes part will deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ, pray for God's spirit to work in the lives of those they know, and come to realise that every aspect of their life is intertwined with prayer.

After the very first Ascension Day, the disciples gathered with Mary, constantly devoting themselves to prayer while they waited for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Like them, our reliance

on the gift of the Holy Spirit is total – on our own we can do nothing.

Through the centuries, Christians have gathered at this time to pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

‘Thy Kingdom Come’ picks up this tradition. Over the past four years, more and more worshipping communities have dedicated the days between Ascension and Pentecost to pray, ‘Come, Holy Spirit’.

This year especially, we are praying that the Spirit would inspire and equip us all to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with our friends and families, our communities and networks, especially those who are

finding our present isolation and distancing most challenging.

And so, if you haven't taken an active part in 'thy kingdom come' before, I hope we can all make time this year to centre our lives in the prayer of the Church, join with other Christians throughout the world, and celebrate our Easter faith as we pray 'thy kingdom come'.

There are suggestions for prayer during this novena given below.

A Time of Waiting

Today's Gospel sets before us Our Lord's plan for the disciples. He was instructing them to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the Biblical narratives we are constantly being directed to times of waiting. Having built the ark and survived the flooding of the earth, Noah and his family must wait while the waters subside, before they can return to dry land.

The people of Israel in slavery in Egypt wait with faith for Pharaoh to change his mind

and let the people go, despite the many plagues the Egyptians endured.

Later the children of Israel are in exile in Babylon – a time of great anguish and uncertainty. From their exile, we hear the cry of the psalmist in Psalm 137 – ‘How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?’ In our situation today, we do indeed struggle to sing the Lord’s song in this strange land plagued with the coronavirus.

All the usual ways in which we worship God have been closed off to us. Our places of worship are shut and our gentle and pleasant daily encounters with each other have been prohibited. We are like the people of Israel in exile in Babylon.

And yet, we have endeavoured to do our best to sing the Lord's song in this land, which has become a strange place because of our distancing from each other.

This is never how we want to live our lives. We may have our ups-and-downs with our neighbours and even our families, but we remain people who want to maintain our links of friendship and faith; links of family and community, and to celebrate these in all situations.

Thankfully in the past few weeks, we have largely maintained those bonds of friendship and community in the midst of the crisis we are living through.

As Christian people we must work hard to maintain our lives of prayer, to encourage one another, and to uphold each other in this time of waiting. We may perhaps pray with the psalmist,

I waited patiently for the Lord : and he inclined unto me, and heard my calling. He hath put a new song in my mouth : even a thanksgiving unto our God. Let all those that seek thee be joyful and glad in thee : and let such as love thy salvation say alway, The Lord be praised.

When will the current restrictions come to an end? When we will return to our normal lives, or will that ever truly happen?

In the middle of the difficulties we now experience, we are clearly in a time of waiting, and I encourage you to use that time as productively as you can.

This can be a time for prayer, and a time for a deeper commitment in our Christian faith. It could be all too easy to slide into despair, worry and fear in these uncertain times. But throughout scripture we continue to hear God's clear message which begins with 'Do not be afraid', and then goes on to say 'I am with you'. In all the uncertainty of our

present time, let us set fears aside, and continue to pray that God will walk with us and beside us in all we encounter day by day.

As we pray together in this novena let us join together in using this prayer.

Almighty God, your ascended Son has sent us into the world to preach the good news of your kingdom: inspire us with your Spirit and fill our hearts with the fire of your love, that all who hear your Word may be drawn to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Collect for Thy Kingdom Come

Thy Kingdom Come

Friday 22 May

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures for ever, and his faithfulness to all generations.
(Psalm 100)

Saturday 23 May

When it was evening, he came with the twelve. While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.' When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Mark 14.17, 22-26)

Sunday 24 May

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, “God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.” But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.’ (Luke 18.10-14)

Monday 25 May

Naomi was left without her two sons or her husband. Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had had consideration for his people and given them food. So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband.' Then she kissed them,

and they wept aloud. They said to her, 'No, we will return with you to your people.'

(Ruth 1.5b-10)

Tuesday 26 May

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.' And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.' (Matthew 26: 36-39)

Wednesday 27 May

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road.

Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.

Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who

are there, and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” (Luke 10:1,5-9)

Thursday 28 May

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also

covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion. (Psalm 84:1-7)

Friday 29 May

The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!' He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you.

Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.' At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven

and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. (Luke 10:17-21)

Saturday 30 May

He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer

silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' (1 Kings 19:11-13)

The full prayer and intercession resource can be downloaded from

https://www.thykingdomcome.global/sites/default/files/2020-05/14886_DofCanterbury_Novena%20%28TKC%29_web.pdf