

The 6th Sunday of Easter

17 May 2020

Hymn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oL9ey1TM6No>

**Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring.
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.**

**Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.**

**In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.**

**Women and men, in age and youth,
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.**

**Christ is alive, and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love and praise.**

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

Cf Is 48.20

Proclaim a joyful sound and let it be heard;
proclaim to the ends of the earth:
The Lord has freed his people, alleluia.

Greeting

✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Christ is risen, alleluia.
He is risen indeed, alleluia.

Penitential Act

Dear friends,
this water will be sprinkled on us
as a memorial of our Baptism.
May the Lord our God help us by his grace
to remain faithful to the Spirit we have received.

The celebrant sprinkles all present with holy water, moving through the church.
Meanwhile, the chant I saw water (Vidi aquam), or another appropriate chant is sung.

The chant, in Latin,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=429smHGuy3I>

I saw water flowing from the Temple,
from its right-hand side, alleluia:
and all to whom this water came
were saved and shall say: alleluia, alleluia.

Verses from Psalm 118 and the doxology Glory to God may also be sung.

The celebrant says:

May almighty God cleanse us of our sins,
and through the celebration of this Eucharist
make us worthy to share at the table of his Kingdom.
Amen.

Hymn of Praise

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to God's people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Collect

Let us pray.

O God,
you have prepared for those who love you
joys beyond our understanding:
pour into our hearts such love for you,
that, loving you above all else,
we may obtain your promises
that exceed all we can desire;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading

Acts 17.22-31

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, ‘Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, “To an unknown god.” What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we too are his offspring.” Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.’

For the word of the Lord,
thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 66.7-19

℟. Bless our God, you peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard.

- 7 Bless our God, you peoples;
and cause his praises to resound .
8 Who has held our souls in life, ,
who has not suffered our feet to slip. **℟.**

- 9 For you have proved us, O God;
you have tried us as silver is tried.
- 10 You brought us into the net;
you laid sharp torments on our loins.
- 11 You let enemies ride over our heads;
we went through fire and water;
you brought us out into a place of liberty. **Ṛ.**
- 12 I will come into your house with burnt-offerings:
and I will pay you my vows,
- 13 The vows that opened my lips:
that my mouth uttered when I was in trouble.
- 14 I will offer you burnt offerings of fattened beasts with the smoke of rams;
I will sacrifice a bull and the flesh of goats. **Ṛ.**
- 15 Come then and hear, all you that fear God,
and I will tell you what he has done for me.
- 16 I called out to him with my mouth,
and his praise was on my tongue.
- 17 If I had cherished wickedness in my heart,
the Lord would not have heard me; **Ṛ.**
- 18 But God has heard me;
he has heeded the voice of my prayer.
- 19 Praise be to God, who has not turned back my prayer,
or his steadfast love from me. **Ṛ.**

Second Reading

1 Peter 3.13-22

A reading from the first letter of Peter.

Who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you – not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

For the word of the Lord,
thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Jn 14.23

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus said: 'If any love me they will keep my word,
and my Father will love them, and we shall come to them.'

Alleluia!

Gospel

John 14.15-21

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

✠ A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus said to his disciples: '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 for ever. 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.'

For the Gospel of the Lord,

praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Pause to reflect on the Word.

Reflection

The Revd Sr Juliana SI

I flew to Melbourne for a meeting in mid February. The corona virus was flourishing in Wuhan, China. I was a bit nervous, and took a small bottle of sanitiser with me for the flight. No one else seemed to be much bothered on the plane, and it was all ok.

When I got back, I had a phone call from my nephew who, in my opinion, spends far too much time surfing the net and getting over anxious about what he finds. He rang to warn me to be careful because of the corona virus. It would be become a pandemic like the Spanish flu he said. I tried to soothe his anxieties ... not quite like that, I said. Aunty, he said, It's going to be like the Rapture. At that time, I thought my nephew needed to get a grip of himself. I assured him I'd be fine, and so would he.

Now the Rapture, for those of you unfamiliar with this term, refers to the End Times, when the peoples of the world will be gathered together in the air to meet Jesus Christ. There are those who believe that this rapture will precede the coming of Christ and the Day of Judgment, and those who believe that the two events will be at the same time, in fact a single event. Anglicans hold with the latter idea of the single event, though who knows when or where?

Well, a month down the track, in mid to late March, Covid-19 was wreaking havoc through the wider world, not just China ... very certainly threatening us in Australia. In the stressful weeks since then, I wonder if there have been a few of us who have woken

up in the morning, and felt a relief that we were still ok and alive. And yet, we may have had to deal with those feelings of disease ... as though the earth has moved under us. What on earth will happen next? It has not been quite the rapture my nephew alluded to ... but he was certainly closer to the truth in February than I was. At times Covid-19 seems to threaten our very existence. And maybe we have wondered what God has been doing in all this. Where is he?

Sitting on his hands as the world around us has crumbled?

In many ways, I think we may be sharing something of what the disciples experienced when Jesus told them, that he would leave them, to return to the Father ... they would see him no more. Their hopes and dreams would be shattered, the world as they had come to know it was being taken from them. They felt bereft.

And Jesus says to them, “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.”

Apparently there is a whole new lingo that has sprung up around Covid-19. As I describe some of my feelings these last weeks, you might think that I am “Coronalusional”, ie. I have a distorted reality, caused by anxiety or too much time spent in lockdown.

You too may wonder if we are living in the “coronapocalypse” ... ie. living a life which will never return to normal, or worse, the human species will be wiped out by a mutating virus. Well who knows, but the rapture hasn't come ... yet. But we may well be sharing the feeling the disciples had at the imminent departure of Jesus ... a feeling of being left alone, in a world left to cope as best it may.

The words of Jesus speak to us today. “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.” Jesus does come to us, today, either in the rapture, but more likely for the present, experienced as his Spirit.

Intellectually we know that Jesus's spirit lives with us; we believe that in faith. But for myself, I also have to live with the doubt of whether he is with us ... faith and doubt going together, as they so often do, for me at least.

But Jesus says more than that to us in this passage. He says, “On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” But what does Jesus mean when he says, “I am in my Father and you in me and I in you.” We hear Jesus say this type of saying a few times, in John's gospel. For example John records Jesus saying in Chapter 17, “The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one.”

These sayings can become mesmerising and we glide over the familiarity of them. But what does it mean to us ... especially in these days we are living in?

For the past two months I have been reading Ruth Burrows, that Carmelite nun, spiritual writer, some of whose work I shared with you earlier this year.

Ruth Burrows writes, that some of us think that we can come to the Father directly, that we no longer need Jesus. But, she says, “We are failing to see the import of Jesus' words, that “to see him is to see the Father, that to know him is to know the Father, that to be in

him is to be in the Father.” But Jesus also says, “No one can come to the Father but by me.” Now this is not in the sense that you use me to get to him and when you have got to him, you don't need me anymore ... that you have simply no contact with the Father except through me in time and in eternity. Not at all. In fact this is direct contact ... Jesus' communication is “pure God” and only his communication is “pure God.” What we call the mystical, a direct, unmediated contact with God, is Jesus. He is his living touch. We have this direct contact only in him ... in fact, we are becoming Jesus ... we are becoming Jesus.

And further, Ruth Burrows says,

“The mystical life is beyond our power, nothing we can do can bring us to it, but God is longing to give it to us, to all of us, not to a select few. He has made us for this, to share his divinity, to become his sons and daughters in very truth, with all that this implies. The prerequisite on our part is an acceptance of poverty, of need, of helplessness; the deep awareness that we need Jesus our saviour who alone brings God and man together, who is our holiness ... We are eager to stress that the mystical is of the essence of Christianity, not the privileged way of the few. To be more precise: it means being wholly possessed by God.”

As I read these quotes to you from Ruth Burrows, I am very aware how dense her text is ... how far she pushes the envelope in our understanding of what Jesus is saying in our gospel reading today. Therefore, I do suggest that you take the time to read the text of her quotes and think about them to get to a deeper understanding of what she is saying ... a greater perception of what Jesus is offering each of us in our pandemic world, so we may not feel alone ... we may instead know that we are being offered the life of being at one with Father, in Jesus Christ.

At the end of the text of this homily I have put Ruth Burrow's quotes in full so you may further ponder them at your leisure. I hope they will help to explain what Jesus is saying to us about how he is with us always. I hope they may be of some strength to us all as we experience such existential disruptions to our very selves.

Ruth Burrow's quotes in full:

“Many of us have the secret notion that we are working to get to a “pure” prayer where “God” is experienced directly, where we no longer need Jesus. We are failing to see the import of Jesus' words that to see him is to see the Father, that to know him is to know the Father, that to be in him is to be in the Father and that we have no direct link with the Father, if by “direct” we mean other than through Jesus. We want to think we have but we have not. “No one can come to the Father but by me,” and this, not in the sense that you use me to get to him and when you have got to him you don't need me anymore, but you have simply no contact with the Father except through me in time and in eternity. But of course, this is direct contact. Jesus' communication is “pure God” and only his communication is “pure God.” What we call the mystical, a direct, unmediated contact with God, is Jesus. He is his living touch. We have this direct contact only in him ... [H]is life is secretly, escaping our consciousness, substituting itself for ours. We are becoming Jesus ... ”

And further, Ruth Burrows says,

“The mystical life is beyond our power, nothing we can do can bring us to it, but God is longing to give it to us, to all of us, not to a select few. He made us for this, to share his divinity, to become his sons and daughters in very truth, with all that this implies. The prerequisite on our part is an acceptance of poverty, of need, of helplessness; the deep awareness that we need Jesus our savior who alone brings God and man together, who is our holiness ... We are eager to stress that the mystical is of the essence of Christianity, not the privileged way of the few. To be more precise: it means being wholly possessed by God.

Ruth Burrows: Essential Writings, Modern Spiritual Masters Series, ed. Michelle Jones

The Apostles’ Creed

Let us profess the faith of the church:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father;
from there he will come to judge
the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of the People

Pray for the world and the church.

Greeting of Peace

We are the body of Christ.

God’s Spirit is with us.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

When all is prepared, the Priest says,

Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours
may be acceptable to God, the Father almighty.

**May the Lord accept our sacrifice
for the praise and glory of God's name,
for our good, and the good of all God's holy Church.**

Prayer over the Offerings

God of glory,
accept all we offer you this day,
and bring us to that eternal city of love and light,
where Christ is King.
We ask this in his name. **Amen.**

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Worship and praise belong to you, Author of all being.
Your power sustains, your love restores, our broken world.
You are unceasingly at work,
from chaos bringing order
and filling emptiness with life.

Christ, raised from the dead,
proclaims the dawn of hope.
He lives in us that we may walk in light.

Your Spirit is fire in us,
your breath is power
to purge our sin
and warm our hearts to love.

As children of your redeeming purpose,
freed by him who burst from the tomb
and opened the gate of life,
we offer you our praise,
with angels and archangels
and the whole company of heaven,
singing the hymn of your unending glory:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Praise and thanksgiving be to you, Lord of all,
for by the Cross eternal life is ours
and death is swallowed up in victory.
In the first light of Easter
glory broke from the tomb
and changed the women's sorrow into joy.
From the Garden the mystery dawned
that he whom they had loved and lost
is with us now
in every place for ever.

Making himself known in the breaking of the bread,
speaking peace to the fearful disciples,
welcoming weary fishermen on the shore,
he renewed the promise of his presence
and of new birth in the Spirit
who sets the seal of freedom on your sons and daughters.

Before he was given up to suffering and death,
recalling the night of Israel's release,
the night in which slaves walked free,
at supper with his disciples
he took bread and offered you thanks.
He broke the bread,
and gave it to them, saying:
"Take, eat.
This is my Body: it is broken for you."

After supper, he took the cup,
he offered you thanks,
and gave it to them saying:
"Drink this, all of you.
This is my Blood of the new covenant;
it is poured out for you, and for all,
that sins may be forgiven.
Do this in remembrance of me."

We now obey your Son's command
We recall his blessed passion and death,
his glorious resurrection and ascension;
and we look for the coming of his Kingdom.
Made one with him, we offer you these gifts
and with them ourselves
a single, holy living sacrifice.

Hear us, most merciful Father,
and send your Holy Spirit upon us
and upon this bread and this wine,
that, overshadowed by his life-giving power,
they may be the Body and Blood of your Son,
and we may be kindled with the fire of your love
and renewed for the service of your Kingdom.

Help us, who are baptised into the fellowship of Christ's Body
to live and work to your praise and glory;
may we grow together in unity and love
until at last, in your new creation,
we enter into our heritage
in the company of the Virgin Mary,
the apostles, and prophets,
and of all our brothers and sisters
living and departed.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be to you,
Lord of all ages,
world without end.

Amen.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray with confidence to the Father
in the words our Saviour against us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
graciously grant peace in our days,
that, by the help of your mercy,
we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

The Breaking of the Bread

The celebrant breaks the bread, saying –

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.
We who are many are one body,
for we all share in the one bread.

While the bread is broken Agnus Dei is sung –

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Act of Spiritual Communion

St Alphonsus Liguori

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally, come spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there, and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

Music for Reflection

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFUGoq2z9OY>

If ye love me, keep my commandments
by Thomas Tallis

Communion Antiphon

Jn 14.15-16

If you love me, keep my commandments, says the Lord,
and I will ask the Father and he will send you another Paraclete,
to abide with you for ever, alleluia.

Prayer after Communion

Father,
you restored us to life
by raising your Son from death.
May we who receive this sacrament
always be strengthened to do your will,
in the name of Jesus Christ the risen Lord. **Amen.**

Postcommunion Hymn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkThxONfQ7Y>

**Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.**

**Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.**

**Finish then thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee:
Changed from glory into glory
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee
lost in wonder, love, and praise!**

THE CONCLUDING RITES

Blessing and Dismissal

The God of peace,
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
the great shepherd of the sheep,
through the blood of the everlasting covenant,
make you perfect in every good work to do his will,
working in you what is pleasing in his sight;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

At the Shrine of Our Lady

Regina Coeli

**Joy to thee, O Queen of heaven, alleluia!
He whom thou wast meet to bear, alleluia!
As he promised hath arisen, alleluia!
Pour for us to God thy prayer, alleluia!**

Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.
For the Lord has truly risen, alleluia.

Let us pray.

O God,
Who gave joy to the world through the resurrection of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
grant we pray, that with his mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joys of
everlasting life. Through the same Christ our Lord. **Amen.**