

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 22 MAY 2022 – 6th of Easter

COLLECT

God our redeemer,
you have delivered us from the power of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us
to eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 67

- 1 God be gracious to us and bless us ♦
and make his face to shine upon us,
- 2 That your way may be known upon earth, ♦
your saving power among all nations.
- 3 Let the peoples praise you, O God; ♦
let all the peoples praise you.
- 4 O let the nations rejoice and be glad, ♦
for you will judge the peoples righteously
and govern the nations upon earth.
- 5 Let the peoples praise you, O God; ♦
let all the peoples praise you.
- 6 Then shall the earth bring forth her increase, ♦
and God, our own God, will bless us.
- 7 God will bless us, ♦
and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

Acts 16.9–15

⁹During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' ¹⁰When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

¹¹We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, ¹²and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. ¹³On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.' And she prevailed upon us.

John 14.23–29

²³Jesus answered, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

²⁵ 'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. ²⁸You heard me say to you, "I am going away, and I am coming to you." If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

A Reflection by Peter...

Some years ago I remember a friend of mine telling me of the day when her mother announced that she was coming to live with her. "I'm not managing so well these days, so the sensible thing is for me to come and move in with you," she said. As it turned out, she was at the very early stages of Alzheimer's and a long and difficult four years followed. The obvious point is that we don't expect people, even close relatives, to announce that they are moving in with us – and if it does happen we are understandably, and perhaps rightly, a bit nervous.

Listen again to today's Gospel reading: Jesus say, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." Here is the same message: we will come and move in with you. But this time it's not just one person. Jesus says 'we' – and that means not just Jesus and the Father, but the Holy Spirit too. Ordinarily that would set us thinking, "But where am I going to put them? Can they all share one room?"

Here we have both similarity and difference: being ready to welcome God, to rejoice in God's abiding presence with us, is a challenge; it does require adjustment to our ordinary ways of thinking and being – in a way that is not unlike welcoming a relative who comes to live with you. But it is also utterly different. This promise of Jesus is about God's gifts of peace and love. And Jesus tells us that his peace is not like the peace the world strives for. Rather, God's gift of peace is a deep abiding in the heart of God so that our hearts are not troubled or afraid. This is the peace 'that passes all understanding', the peace that embraces us when a shock or tragedy knocks us sideways. And this gift comes from God's presence with us – beside us, within us, before us, behind us. Intimately present, yet unseen, not taking up the spare room, or leaving messy boots at the door. This presence, this abiding (as John's Gospel calls it) is the fruit of the resurrection – that new life that began on the first Easter day and is the same today and for ever. Alleluia!