

“CHANGING MINDS....CHANGING HEARTS”

Easter to Pentecost, 2019

Small Group Gathering for Week No 7

Gospel: 8th Sunday of Easter; John 7: 37-39

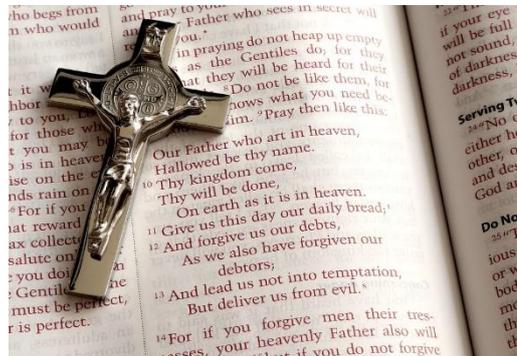
Gather:

A candle is lit to signal the start of our gathering. The moving light of the candle is a sign of the living Christ, the Light of the World, with us. (A short time of silence).

Prayer:

We begin our last meeting with the prayer Jesus taught us. We think of it as the original Christian prayer, but it is a Jewish prayer, originally taught by a Jew to Jews. Muslims too would have no objections to the thoughts and theology expressed in the prayer by one whom they honour as a great prophet. The Lord's Prayer being a badge of Christianity means those other great faith traditions are unlikely to adopt it but its universal appropriateness is obvious.

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive
those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen



My Present Life:

Think of your life at present. Spend at least five minutes in silence thinking about the following questions.

When have you felt uplifted because of your membership of a group/club/team/organisation?

What was/is uniting yourself and your fellow members?

A Faith Angle:

Last Sunday, the Church throughout the world encountered Christ in the following part of the Gospel. Take your time to read it through slowly in silence or listen as a member of your group reads it aloud.

Spend time in prayerful, silent engagement with the text in a way you like.

John 7: 37-39

³⁷ On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, ³⁸ and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹ Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

(Bible Gateway, New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition,
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=+John+7%3A+37-39&version=NRSVCE> retrieved 12/03/2019)

Some Other Thoughts:

The gospel reading is the one proclaimed at the Vigil Mass of Pentecost. It is part of another speech of Jesus given in Jerusalem at festival time; this time the festival of Tabernacles.

As one element of this festival, on seven successive days, members of the Temple clergy would draw water from the Pool of Siloam, take it in procession to the Temple and pour the water, and wine, on the altar of sacrifice. A strong theme of the event was the community's praying for abundant rain in the year ahead.

Tabernacles continued into a last, eighth and greatest day. On that day there was no procession of water. That is the setting in which Jesus presents himself as the true source of living water, the origin of true life. Not him alone. Those who believe in Jesus will not only receive life from him, they will give true life to others.

John, immediately points out that Jesus "was referring to the Spirit". This Spirit, as we have seen in the last few weeks will not be given to Jesus' followers just as individuals. The Spirit will be given to them as a community, a communion, that will itself be marked by the members' love for each other and for being a setting where Christ's peace is found.



Sharing:

If you wish, only if you wish, share one or two (no more than two) of your thoughts or insights about the passage. Please speak for no more than twenty seconds at a time. This sharing is not a time for comparing the values of people's comments and it is not a time for debate.

Now go back to the gospel reading for another period of silent engagement.

My Future Life:

Turning to the future, and in the light of your prayer reflection and discussion, spend at least five minutes considering the following questions.

How can we show that a strong bond unites the people of your parish/Diocese?

Our common baptism unites us with all other Christians, not just Catholics. How can we express that unity?

Go:

This has been a special time. It will have been worthwhile if it leads us to live, even in a little way, as better people. We ask God's blessing on us.

A Concluding Thought

We spent forty-nine days celebrating Easter and on Pentecost Sunday have come to the fiftieth and last day of our festival. Planet Earth may have spun fifty times but there is a real sense in which we have been celebrating one great "Day of the Lord". While Luke presents the coming of the Spirit as an event separated in time from the death and resurrection of Jesus, we have seen how for John, Jesus' death, his resurrection and the sending of his Spirit are part of the one great event.



May all those we meet sense that that great faith-mystery is part of our lives_

Let us pray....

*Lord God,
whose blessings reach the ends of the earth,
you show us your love in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus
whom we call Saviour and Lord
and in sending us your Holy Spirit.*

*Confirm us in our common faith
that we may walk together with you and one another.
Send your blessing on us and on your Church
so that what we have begun in the Spirit
may be brought to completion by your power.
To you, Lord, be glory and honour,*

Now and forever.

Amen

(Adaptation of a blessing for an ecumenical group in "Shorter Book of Blessings")

