

Homily for 5th Sunday of Eastertide (year A) 10th May 2020

The first part of today's Gospel is a popular choice for funerals. And with good reason: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me." Those words speak powerfully at a funeral, and they speak powerfully to us in this time of global Pandemic.

The Gospel also now points us forward. In this latter part of Eastertide our attention moves to focus on the feasts that are to come: Ascension, Pentecost and Trinity Sunday.

Jesus speaks of going somewhere, of going to the Father – our first glimpse of the Ascension. Jesus speaks of His intimate relationship and total union with the Father – our first glimpse of the Blessed Trinity. Jesus says that whoever believes in him will perform the same works, indeed greater works – our first glimpse of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be poured out at Pentecost.

In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles we hear, led by the Holy Spirit, the beginning of the Order of Deacons. The seven, led by Stephen (later to be St Stephen, the first Martyr) are 'filled with the Spirit'. The apostles 'laid their hands on them', a sign we now understand to be a calling down of the Holy Spirit, as they are set apart for their particular ministry.

All the baptised are similarly 'set apart' by the anointing they receive. As St Peter teaches us in the second reading (and I invite you to imagine the words being spoken directly and personally to you): 'you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.'

The Holy Spirit that is poured out on us at Confirmation, gives and unlocks the gifts we need to truly grasp, inhabit and fulfil this great dignity, mission and responsibility that is given to us. It is time now to ask the Holy Spirit to come upon us in this year of Pandemic, to renew these gifts within us as we prepare to celebrate the great Solemnity of Pentecost in three weeks time.