

Homily for the Seventh Sunday of Easter



Artwork by Moya Hogarth

However difficult life becomes, however tragic the circumstances there is always something positive that emerges. Week by week we have witnessed the clapping of the general population thanking the medical and support staff together with the key workers for all they have done for us in the past weeks. So many have been saved by the dedication and expertise of these people many risking infections to care for others. The generosity of many extends way beyond the hospital or care home doors. Neighbours have taken on the support of elderly people who because of age or infirmity or in an effort to limit the threat of infection can't get to the shops or post offices to get their groceries. Modern technology has allowed some of the older members of the community to maintain contact with family and friends. The regular telephone call has helped to ease the loneliness of the sick or housebound. In many areas there is a growing sense of community.

We are all under threat, but it is a threat shared. One of the additional benefits that we have is the extraordinary improvement in the quality of the atmosphere.

We have seen in recent times contrasts between air quality at various places on the globe. Initial pictures show the monuments shrouded in polluted air, the second shot is of these same places in almost pristine environments. We may want things to go back to what they were before the virus but on the other hand we may not want everything to be as it was.

This Sunday is the fifth anniversary of the Holy Father's letter 'Laudato Si' When he tackles the issues around the responsibilities we share in the care and protection of the environment. In front of the altar is a frontal exhibiting the work that families have been doing to address these issues during our time of lockdown. I am conscious that it can't be looked at in any detail at the moment but it will be kept and exhibited again when we have access to the church. There is a special prayer for today which we will recite after the Bidding Prayers at our Mass today. And that brings us to the last theme at our Mass, the call to prayer. The apostles we are told in the first reading, following the Ascension of Jesus returned to Jerusalem and there spent time in continuous prayer, and they were joined in this by the women followers of Jesus. The focus of that prayer was their expectant coming of the Holy Spirit. Prayer was to be central in the lives of the Apostles as it needs to be for us as well. Whatever our intentions we should bring them to the Lord in Prayer. Our prayer should also be more than just intercession. It should be prayer of praise and prayer of thanks. Picking up the themes of Ascension we recognise that Jesus is with us always. Now returned to our Father in heaven he intercedes for us to his Father. He shares our suffering and pain, he brings us healing and holiness. The world is ours, entrusted to us by God, it too should be at the focus of our prayer as we thank God for the great gift given to us by him. The hope we have at Ascension time is in the expectation of the fulfilment of Christ's call to redemption and promise of salvation. Words that we used to mark the start of Easter are words appropriate for the ending of the Easter period. "We are the Easter People and Alleluia is our song".