

Sunday 17th May –Easter 6..

Acts 8:5 – 8, 14 - 17; 1Peter 3: 15- 18; John 14: 15 – 21.

Title: **“Do not let your hearts be troubled...**

I have overcome the world.”

In St. John’s Gospel, at the end of the Last Supper at which, rather than focussing on the meal itself, John chooses to put the spotlight on Jesus washing his disciple’s feet , there occurs three chapters (14, 15 and 16) in which Jesus teaches and encourages his disciples and prepares them for the devastating events that they are about to experience. This whole section can be summed up in the opening words of Chapter 14 and the closing words of Chapter 16.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled...I have overcome the world.”

At the time John has Jesus speaking these words, the disciples would have found it very difficult to understand fully the true import of these words. In that respect, those early disciples were just like us. When things are going well we do not want to countenance the fact that the good times will ever come to an end. Similarly, when things are going badly, as they are for so many people at this present time, it is often hard to hang on to the hope that there will come a time when our present difficulties will pass.

In our gospel reading this morning, Jesus is trying to prepare his disciples for the fact that there will come a time when he will no longer physically be amongst them. Bearing in mind that Jesus was only in his early thirties, this time must have seemed very far off indeed. But as we know with the gift of hindsight, the disciples’ world will be turned upside down in just a few hours. Jesus assures his disciples that they will not be left to endure their difficulties alone. God will send them a helper to steer them through. God’s Spirit of Truth that dwells in Jesus will be poured out directly upon his Church. One of the earliest and simplest definitions of the Church is to be found in the first verse of this morning’s Gospel: *Those who love Jesus and*

keep his commandments.. In the first reading set for today from Acts, we have evidence of just how all-encompassing God's Holy Spirit is. It is open to anyone, even Samaritans, and is affirmed and confirmed through the laying on of hands.

The fact that God the Holy Trinity sustains his people through the ups and downs of life should not just be of historical interest to us, it should be life transforming for us in the here and now. And we must also make sure that this Good News is available to all those who seek it. It is rather lovely that in the Epistle set for today, it is St. Peter (who famously denied his Lord three times) who exhorts us to have a precis of our Christian faith ready "for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have". Whether we are being persecuted, ridiculed or just being asked about our faith, the Good News we have received is for sharing.