

OLAS SCRIPTURE COMMENTARIES JUNE 2025 YEAR C

Sunday 1st June **Seventh Sunday of Easter**

First Reading: Acts 7: 55-60 A background note: deacons were originally appointed to look after the material needs of the community but very quickly these people developed into preachers and evangelists themselves. In today's narrative we have one of them, who has been arrested on account of his preaching the Good News about Jesus. Luke describes Stephen's execution, the first martyr (the word means "witness") on account of faith in Jesus, as something of a mob reaction. The unstoppable spread of the Good News is at the cost of such witnesses, to the faith. One reason the author had in emphasising Stephen's martyrdom is that seemingly casual reference to the man who acted as cloakroom attendant.

Second Reading: Apocalypse 22: 12-14, 16-17, 20 Whoever was responsible for the selection of Scripture readings at Mass sometimes felt entitled to pick and choose sentences of a particular book instead providing a continuous reading of a chapter. Today's selection out of Chapter Twenty-Two is intended to highlight the Risen Lord in triumph, the Beginning and End of all things (Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet, the language writer was using), proclaiming Him to be the source of life to all those who listen to His words.

Gospel: John 17: 20-26 This is part of what is known as the Great Last Supper Discourse. The intertwined double thread running through it is that of unity and love. The unity is of the faithful with each other and with Jesus, and with the indivisible unity of the Son with the Father, the whole bound together with divine love. It's all a bit overwhelming but might we try to make it more real by saying hello to someone we don't know as we are leaving church today?

Sunday 8th June **PENTECOST**

First Reading: Acts 2:1-11 - The Jewish festival of Shavuot, or Pentecost, fifty days after Passover, commemorates the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. There is a *midrash* – a Jewish reflection drawing out the deeper meaning of a teaching – that at Sinai the Law was proclaimed in all the languages of the world but only the Jews listened to it. In the story of the Tower of Babel the people were divided because they could no longer understand each other. Now the New Law is proclaimed, and the miracle is that all can understand, whatever their language. The places mentioned in the text represent areas that had already received the Good News by the time the Acts of the Apostles was written. Proselytes were pagans who had converted to Judaism. Luke uses dramatic symbolism - a gale and tongues of fire - to declare that the apostles find the courage by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Hurricanes and wildfires are destructive but here the message relates to the fire and animation that drives these followers of Jesus.

Second Reading: Romans 8: 8-17 Paul had a deep appreciation of his Jewish culture, but he was also cosmopolitan – he wrote in Greek, the lingua franca of the Mediterranean world – and must have imbibed something of Greek philosophical thinking. There was a current philosophy that thought of the present visible world as being only a shadow of a real world. In writing to a mixed community of Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome Paul makes use of this imagery, contrasting a earthly life that leads to sin and death, with the life of Christ's Spirit

Gospel: John 14: 15-16, 23-26 - Another passage from the Last Supper discourse. Jesus is leaving the physical world but not leaving his disciples hopeless. Because they have absorbed his life-giving word, their lives will be filled with the Divine Spirit who will speak for them in all their tribulations. The question is, how do we relate that to our own experiences of life? There may be mystics, like Julian of Norwich, who find ways of penetrating the deeper hidden mysteries of God but for most of us, it might be by a greater appreciation of other people, a greater sensitivity to the differences, more of an effort to support others in their difficulties without preaching to them. And, perhaps most importantly, to by facing up to what we really are in ourselves! he may not be perfect, but our religion tells us we are children of a loving Father who will not abandon us.

Sunday 15th June **TRINITY SUNDAY**

First Reading Proverbs 8:22-31 - Today's reading is a delightful description of Wisdom as God's craftsperson, ever present in creation, pictured in a fantastic image of the whole of creation, with its billions of galaxies, as being God's playground. It is not a far step from this to thinking of the gift of the Spirit promised by Jesus to his disciples: those dancing flames Luke imagined hovering over the heads of the apostles at Pentecost. Although this book is sometimes known as the "Wisdom of Solomon", it was in fact produced perhaps not more than a century or so before the birth of Jesus. Written in Greek, it does not form part of the Jewish Bible.

Second Reading Romans 5:1-5 - The Christian community in Rome, recipients of Paul's letter, knew what it was to suffer for their faith and Paul attempts to comfort them with a reminder that even their sufferings can be seen as sharing in Christ who has brought them into a state of grace with God through the gift of the Spirit. Paul would have had difficulty recognising our developed doctrine of the Trinity. but his description of our relationship with Father, Son and Spirit is in essence Trinitarian.

Gospel John 16:12-15 - John's gospel, written towards the very end of the first century AD, is the result of years of reflection on the meaning of Jesus' work and it is against that background that he presents the Lord's final discourse with his disciples. It is clear from the synoptic gospels that even to the last there was confusion in the minds of the disciples about the real significance of Jesus' life, death and resurrection – the same might be still said of us today! The work of the Spirit will take years to deepen their appreciation that what Jesus taught, what the Spirit inspires, is from the Father whose children we have become. It's a lifetime's work for us to arrive at that understanding!

Sunday 22nd June **CORPUS CHRISTI: THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST**

First Reading Genesis 14:18-20 - In the first Eucharistic prayer we are so used to hearing "*the bread and wine offered by your priest Melchizedek*", that we might not reflect on the strangeness of a Canaanite King of a thousand years BC being so described in a Catholic Mass. Chapter fourteen of Genesis describes a series of battles fought between petty kings in the area of what was to become Israel. As a result of one of these skirmishes Abram's nephew Lot was captured. Abram (name later changed to Abraham – "Father of many nations") pursued the captor, freed Lot and took a lot of booty. On his return to base with his family and allies, the priest-king of Salem came out to meet him with bread and wine for a feast and pronounced the blessing over him. Salem, we know better as Jerusalem, the city that David made his capital many years later. Melchizedek is described as priest of *The Highest God* – the title of the chief of the Canaanite gods but later attributed to the God of Israel.

Second Reading I Corinthians 11:23-26 - The Christian community in the cosmopolitan city of Corinth must have been a fractious lot, forming cliques who were all too ready to exclude others from their company. Paul reminds them forcibly of the teaching he gave them, about what it is they are doing when they come to share a meal (what we call the Mass had not yet developed into a formal liturgy). At the heart of it is obedience to the command of the Lord given at the Last Supper.

Gospel Luke 9:11-17 - It is worth reading the whole of chapter nine to get today's reading into perspective. Jesus commissioned the Twelve to go out on a missionary journey, proclaiming the Kingdom. In the meantime, King Herod, having executed John the Baptist, was puzzled as to the identity of this preacher from Galilee, and was anxious to see him – to no good purpose. By way of contrast, crowds of ordinary folk were anxious to see – and listen to him. The disciples were directed to feed the hungry crowd. The story is richly symbolic: we are reminded of Luke's emphasis on Jesus' joyful meals with "sinners", of the Messianic promise of feeding the hungry, and the revelation of the Risen Lord on the road to Emmaus. The echoing of the words of the Eucharistic institution is not accidental. The living food Jesus offers is super-abundant, and it is mediated by the disciples, surely a deliberate if oblique reference to the role of those who, by the time this gospel was written, were bringing the Good News to all corners of the Mediterranean world.

Sunday 29th June **FEAST OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL**

In the Gospels Simon Peter is singled out as the leader of the Apostles. Paul, of course, isn't mentioned at all in any of the Gospels. In the Acts of the Apostles he is introduced, under his Jewish name Saul, as being involved in the martyrdom of the Deacon Stephen but, being proud of his Roman citizenship (a fantastic advantage in the Mediterranean world of the time) he later wanted to be known by his Latin name, Paul. Saul/Paul is only later, and we might guess reluctantly accepted as an apostle. At first an ardent persecutor of the Jesus movement, he underwent a dramatic conversion and spent the rest of his life promoting Christianity to the pagans in various cities around the eastern end of the Mediterranean. The two men came to be regarded as having joint but separate roles: Peter having a primary mission to the Jewish people and Paul becoming the apostle to the pagan peoples.

First Reading Acts 12:1-11 - A marvellous piece of dramatic writing, this is Luke at his most descriptive! The story emphasises both the opposition towards the new movement and the irresistible progress it makes. Some of the leaders might be killed but Peter is under divine protection. It's a pity that the final touch is omitted, when the servant girl at the house Peter where Peter seeks refuge is so excited that she forgets to unlock the door in her eagerness to tell the household that Peter is free!

Second Reading II Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18 - This is from one of the so-called pastoral epistles, the author was probably a disciple of Paul whose name he used to give authority to his message. Nevertheless, the sentiments surely sum up perfectly Paul's own understanding of his life's work and where it is leading.

Gospel: Matthew 16: 13-19 - Jesus challenges his disciples regarding his identity. Notice the change from "who do *they* say the Son of Man is?" to "who do *you* say I am?" "This son of man is Son of the living God." To say that someone was "a son of God" did not in itself signify divinity but by the time the gospel was written we see a gradual recognition of Jesus as both human and divine. Jesus was perhaps using an already existing nickname (I think of him being a burly muscular figure of a man, well used to hauling boats ashore, pulling in nets loaded with fish) when he called Peter the Rock: Rocky, we might say! Matthew uses recognised Judaic formula, giving authority to Jewish religious leaders to determine who should be accepted and who should be excluded from the community.