

Reflection for the Seventh Sunday of Easter

A few years ago, the word *liminal* became popular in religious circles, I do not remember why or even if the word was used widely in general conversation. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it in two ways: 1. *Relating to a transitional or initial stage of a process* and 2. *Occupying a position at, or on both sides of a boundary or threshold*. Well, there are plenty of liminal experiences about now. The Coronavirus has taken us to the edge in many aspects of our lives. The boundaries of our knowledge in public health, research, vaccines, and treatments. To the limits of the economy, organisational and personal finance. To the limits of how religious faith is practised and so on. So significant has this time been, many are asking, will things return to the way they were before? Indeed, should all things return to the way they were before? I would like to suggest that our readings this Sunday speak more to the second question rather than the first.

I think we can see in the readings two periods of transition. In our first reading, a group of Jesus' followers gather in the upper room following his Ascension into heaven. They are on both sides of a boundary or a threshold. They are after the Ascension but before Pentecost. Not much is said about them except that together they joined in continuous prayer. In the verses from the Acts of the Apostles previous to the text we read from the liturgy we find reported these words of Jesus: *While at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. He had said, 'This is what you have heard me speak about: for John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.* I think it is reasonable to conclude that their continuous prayer was animated by the expectation and hope of the Holy Spirit. When we turn to the Gospel we are taken to the scene of the Last Supper after the washing of the feet and on the threshold of the Passion. We are let in on the prayer of Jesus. In the footnote to this passage in the *Revised New Jerusalem Bible* I found this lovely quote: *This majestic final chapter of the discourses is almost a meditation on the Lord's Prayer, Mt. 6:9a. Expressing in a unique way the intimacy of the Father and Son, it revolves round the same themes: Father, glorify/hallow the name, doing the will of the Father, deliverance from the Evil One.* Jesus is with the Father and intercedes for us before him as we wait to make our baptism alive again as the Father promised.

As mentioned previously we have our liminal experiences in so many ways. More than ever we need God, the Holy Trinity to guide us safely into the future so we are **all** able to live well. The Feasts we mark are also liminal. We are both sides of a boundary, being after the Resurrection and Ascension but before Pentecost. More than ever we need to be in 'continuous' prayer. The continuity of expectation and hope to be fully open to the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. Is it right that all things should return to the way they were before Coronavirus? Most people would want to leave behind the evils we see in the world and exchange these for the reign of justice, love, and peace. This is the work that begins each Easter and is empowered at Pentecost. But in these preceding days before that empowerment is given once again perhaps, we could pray, with feeling, Come, Holy Spirit for we have reached a threshold and we want you to lead us through.

God bless you, Canon David