



May I Speak in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The last two Sundays have been festival Sundays. Pentecost Sunday and then Trinity Sunday being the first festival Sunday within what we call Ordinary Time to which Fr. Peter referred to last week. Both of these Sundays focus us firstly on the gift and workings of the Holy Spirit and then the Holy Spirit's equality of being with that of God the Father and God the Son in being God the Holy Spirit.

Today's Gospel reading again focuses on the Holy Spirit, but within this reading there is a warning, a warning regarding the danger to us of what Jesus declares is the unforgivable sin, that of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. I think it is today's reading which really does frighten some people so much that it leads to a fear of engaging with the Holy Spirit in any shape or form.

Bishop Michael Colclough who was the Bishop of Kensington when I needed a placement within my training, was very astute when placing me. He noted I had wide experience of different liturgical practices and traditions and Chaplaincy Ministries but noted I had no Charismatic experience. So off I was sent with my heart pounding in fear to Holy Trinity Hounslow, where the work of the Holy Spirit was expected, welcomed and engaged with. Much to my amazement a three month placement grew to five as my fear subsided and was replaced with respect, engagement and awe via my experiences, all of which are not for today in themselves, but through them I was given a

deepened understanding. Part of this was a realisation that without the workings of the Holy Spirit and our willingness to be vulnerable to where the Holy Spirit leads, our efforts to live out the Gospel and grow the Kingdom of God will never be truly of God.

From Advent Sunday through to Pentecost we have heard the wonderful story of both creation and salvation through the promise of God's own Son, Jesus Christ's birth, ministry, death and resurrection. And now as we look to the next six months of Pentecost to Advent we move into Ordinary Time marked liturgically by our green vestments and adornments. Yet green often referred to as God's colour of creation is far from ordinary, and if you look to Fay's beautiful green banner we can see the word Growth across the top. If we look to our gardens we can literally see plants growing, I am having to fasten in the tendrils of the sweet peas on a daily basis, the buds of the roses are fattening and showing glimpses of the colour they enclose just prior to bursting open and unfurling their velvet like petals. This coincides with the gradual opening up of society following the effects of the pandemic and concomitantly the steady return to worship and church life.

Last week I and other clergy and key lay workers received a communication from Bishop Steven of Oxford and the area Suffragan Bishops which I would like to read to you some sections of.

It is entitled – **Extraordinary Time: a time to gather stones together (Ecc. 2.5)** and goes on to say-

[‘This seems a good moment to move the horizon on to the next six months - the period between Pentecost and Advent. How will we navigate this next period of our life together?’](#)

[The Church calls this period ordinary time, but the next six months must be far more! We need them to be an extraordinary time of gentle regathering, of determined rebuilding, of God rekindling fire in our hearts, of nursing our communities back to health, of rebirth for our church, and of God calling many people to new ministries and faith.](#)

[For ordinary time to be an extraordinary time, we will need to remember to pray each day, Come, Holy Spirit, and invite God by his Spirit to breathe God's life into all we do together.](#)

[So we want rename this season this year. As bishops, we want to look back when we get to Advent and say: well that really was an extraordinary time, when the](#)

Church regathered and moved forward in mission. Look at how far we have come. Look at the fruits of the Spirit's work. Who would have believed it back in May? The people of God across this whole diocese are amazing – but God is more wonderful and amazing still.'

This is followed by a call to clergy and lay ministers and officers to take care of themselves, holidays, day's off, retreats and quiet days, even if this means reduced patterns of worship! I have never witnessed so much oversight and compassion to the care of the churches ministry being voiced.

The bishops then turn to 'A more Contemplative church' saying –

'One of the lessons of the pandemic has been the return to the essentials of pastoral ministry for all of us, and these will be needed in the months to come. We do not want the church to become over busy in the next six months but to build back slowly, one step at a time, carefully and prayerfully. Key to this will be taking time to listen.

The church which regathers will not be the same church: so much has happened in our common life. We simply do not know much of what God has been doing in the church and in wider society: discovering what has been happening and the key priorities which emerge will take time. Each of us as bishops is looking forward to being out and about again and reconnecting with parishes and deaneries in person in the coming months. It will be easy to be overwhelmed by all that is expected - we can help each other here by listening and encouragement and support.'

Their call going forwards over the next six months is that 'May they indeed be an extraordinary time. Come Holy Spirit!

So as we go forward from today may we regard the months ahead as 'extraordinary time' and may we all pray daily Come Holy Spirit upon all our prayer, activity and stillness. Pray Come Holy Spirit for our Ministry and PCC here at St Michaels as we take our church through this extraordinary time, and pray for all those around the world where the covid pandemic still ravages communities. And may we have the courage and humility to let go and allow ourselves to trust to the Holy Spirits leading.

Please join me now by praying three times

Come Holy Spirit. Come Holy Spirit. Come Holy Spirit.

Acknowledgements.

The New Oxford Annotated Bible OUP
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