



Sixth Sunday of Easter † Sunday 26th May 2019

England & Wales Cycle of Prayer:

New Members of the Church and Evangelisation

Keynote: Praise God! Ever-present in spirit, dwelling among God's People!

Acts of the Apostles 15: 1-2, 22-29

'Some men came down from Judaea and taught the brothers, "Unless you have yourselves circumcised in the tradition of Moses you cannot be saved." This led to disagreement ...and after a long argument with these men it was arranged that Paul and Barnabas... would go up to Jerusalem and discuss the problem with the apostles and elders.' The early church faced a major crisis! What to do about the pagans entering the Christian community, should they be circumcised and compelled to follow the traditional Jewish ritual customs? The Council at Jerusalem guided by the Holy Spirit, decided in favour of freedom. The gentile converts were not to be bound by the prescripts of the Mosaic Law. The decision was a decisive turning point for the Church. *'The apostles and elders, your brethren, send greetings... we hear that some of our members have disturbed you with their demands and have unsettled your minds. They acted without any authority from us, and so we decided unanimously...'* They select delegates and a letter confirming the decision is sent to all the local churches, *'It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to saddle you with any burden beyond the essentials...'* As Christian communities we still face challenging moral and religious issues today, we need to be open to the Spirit, and to identify the essentials of the gospel of freedom which we have received from the Lord. Interpreting the signs of our times in the light of faith.

Responsorial Psalm 66 (67) – A thanksgiving song for the goodness of the earth. Alleluia!

Book of Revelation 21: 10–14, 22-23

We are again given another of the visions of John. This time, the new Holy City of Jerusalem: *'In the spirit, the angel took me to the top of an enormous high mountain and showed me Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven...'* We might be mistaken if we try to interpret all the details of this vision; for John, using the language of the ancient apocalyptic tradition, is showing the fundamental continuity between the People of the old covenant and the People of God in the new age. This vision of the glorious future of the church is a sign of hope to the Christian community as it makes its pilgrim way to the new and heavenly Jerusalem. For the Apostle John, the presence of the Spirit among the people is the true sign of God's guiding presence now replacing the former Temple at Jerusalem: *'I saw,'* says John, *'there was no temple in the city since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple and the city did not need the sun or the moon for light, since it was lit by the radiant glory of God and the Lamb was a lighted torch for it.'*

Gospel according to John 14: 23-29

More words from Jesus' farewell discourse at the Last Supper: *'If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him...'* That promise of the abiding presence of God with the church runs through the liturgy today. In the Acts of the Apostles, we see the Spirit at work in the Church; in the Book of Revelation the Spirit is the sign of the new age; now in the gospel Jesus says, *'The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.'* The gospel text reminds us of the words of Jesus, *'If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him... Peace, I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you... do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me say: I am going away, and shall return.'* Take a moment of quiet, to plumb the depths of God's presence in your life today.