



Seventh Sunday of Easter

† Sunday 2nd June 2019

In England & Wales Cycle of Prayer:

New members of the Church/The Right Use of the Media

Keynote: Disciples are the true witnesses

Acts of the Apostles 7: 55-60

Luke the author tells us: *‘Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God’s right hand. “I can see the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God”. At this all the members of the council shouted out and stopped their ears with their hands; then they rushed at him and sent him out of the city and stoned him.’ The witnesses put down their clothes at the feet of a young man called Saul.’ ‘As they were stoning him, Stephen said an invocation: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit... Lord, do not hold this sin against them”; and with these words he fell asleep.’* Stephen is the true witness here to his faith in the Lord, and there are other witnesses standing by, including the future to be called apostle, Paul. What sort of witness are you to be?

Responsorial Psalm 96 (97) — Earth rejoices in its king!

Book of Revelations 22: 12-14,16

Again the language and style of this book is not the easiest to understand. Here another vision from the Apostle John banished to the prison island of Patmos. *‘I, John, heard a voice speaking to me “Very soon now, I shall be with you again, bringing the reward to be given to everyone according to what each deserves. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Happy are those who will have washed their robes clean, so that they will have the right to feed on the tree of life and can come through the gates of the city.”’* You might reflect on the fact that in the story of creation and the Garden of Eden, the first man and woman had been forbidden to eat of the two trees in the centre of paradise: The Tree of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life. Having eaten of the fruit of the first tree they were banished from paradise, and the gates were barred against them with guards set. So mankind was condemned to a hard life of toil and to death. But here, the Apostle John hears God promising that those who wash their robes clean can feed on the tree of life and come through the gates. *‘The Spirit says, “Come,” Let everyone who listens answer: “Come”... all who want it may have the water of life, and have it free.’*

Gospel according to John 17: 20-26

This gospel passage continues the priestly prayer Jesus utters at the Last Supper, praying initially for the unity of the Apostles, and then, *‘Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: “Holy Father, I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one.”’* Jesus is praying for the unity of the Church and for those who will come to believe in him as Lord following the teaching of the Apostles. The unity of the first disciples must be a permanent characteristic of the faith community or it will be unable to perform its essential mission in the future. That mission is based upon unity in the Spirit. *“With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me.”* So once again we are to be the true witnesses.

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