

## **Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

### **Call to worship**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray:

God our Father, your love is at work in all that you have made.

Son of God, in your likeness we are made new.

Holy Spirit, you touch our lives with hope.

Receive our worship, claim us for your service, set us free to honour you today as we come together, for You, with You and in You. Amen

### **Confession**

Holy God, giver of light and grace, we have sinned against you and against our fellow men and women, through ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We have belittled your love and betrayed your trust. We are sorry, we are ashamed, we repent of all our sins. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past and lead us out from darkness to walk as children of light.

(Silence)

### **Assurance of Pardon**

Jesus died and rose again for you. In humble penitence, accept his pardon and receive his peace.

Amen

## **The Lord's prayer**

At the Saviour's command and formed by His divine teaching we pray together:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen**

## **Hymn: Love Divine**

### **New Testament Reading:**

#### **The Gospel of Saint John 17:1-11**

1 After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said: "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. 5 So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. 6 I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8 for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10 All mine are yours and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

### **Reflection**

Thursday was Ascension Day and this Sunday we remember when the living and resurrected Jesus ascended to heaven. Knowing what was going to happen to him, Jesus prayed for us to the Father before the events of the crucifixion and resurrection.

He was and is concerned about his disciples, but he also knows that, thanks to the cross and resurrection, the Holy Spirit would come to be with them and to all those who would believe in God through their word.

As Jesus glorifies the Father by giving himself up to save all those who come to him, the Father glorifies the Son by raising him from the dead. As you can see, the active and selfless love shared by the persons of the Trinity, is an example for Jesus' disciples to follow. If we understand God's love for us, we don't go around upsetting people and holding a grudge, but we apply that active and selfless love to all. Sometimes it takes time to reflect, to find the right words and the courage to act. It's hard, even very hard when we have been upset by someone. But Jesus prayed to the Father that we may be one as he and the Father are one.

What would be the last wish of God the Son before he goes to heaven? He wishes for us to be as one, and this reading is clearly stating that. So, I wonder, why are we still separate as Christians?

Jesus tells us that unity is the essential part of our lives as followers of Christ because in unity we make visible the invisible divine communion with God and with one another. Although we are all united by baptism as the seal of the Holy Spirit, we have had so many divisions in history. As a famous theologian noted before his death, the world outside the Church does not understand our divisions, in fact they are a hindrance to the propagation of the good news of Jesus Christ. We need, therefore, to work together towards unity as Jesus wanted. Our Church is founded on ecumenical principles of unity among Christians. But ecumenical work requires collaboration and openness to dialogue, focussing on what we have together rather than what we do not have. Looking at what makes us Christians rather than picking on our differences.

The reading today tells us that Christian unity is a gift of grace from God. It happens when we let the Holy Spirit guide us in what He wants for the Church. As Christians we are always called to come together with a spirit of repentance, humility, love and prayer because then we will be able to surrender our will and let God guide us in what is needed.

We joined our Church because we believed in the work of reunification between Christians, but this can only happen through the Holy Spirit and the daily application of love and humility by all the disciples of Christ.

Before dying on the cross, Jesus was praying to the Father for Christian unity. Are we working for him to fulfil his prayer, or are we going against his final wishes?

One day our Lord Jesus will return as he promised us. When we pray “your kingdom come, your will be done” is that what we truly feel in our hearts? When I pray those words, I always see one Church, the whole Christian Church united in humility and love.

Amen

**Hymn: All people that on earth do dwell**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Let us pray:

Loving God, you care for all your children; you hear each and every prayer, you see each and every heart. Give peace and love to those who call upon you and receive us into your kingdom now and in the life everlasting.

Bless your Church, here and everywhere. Bless your people and inspire them with love towards you and one another.

Comfort those who are in trouble or pain. Heal the sick and speak to those who are dying now and to those who are losing loved ones now.

Bless our homes and churches, that love and joy may dwell there and keep those absent from us within the protection of your love.

Amen

### **Benediction:**

The blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you always. Amen

Rev. Bruno Boldrini