

5<sup>th</sup> May 2024  
Sixth Sunday of Easter

### Living the Word: Acts 10.44-48

This crucial passage in the life of the early church demonstrates the all-encompassing love of God, a love which surrounds the whole of creation, and not just the chosen of the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit descending on the gentiles before they receive baptism reminds us that God does not rely on outward signs to do his work. Circumcision therefore becomes unnecessary, and the Church becomes available to all who put their faith and trust in God. Yet Peter's insistence on baptism with water shows that there is still a proper order in the Church. Do you know someone who would happily use the term 'Christian' to describe themselves but who has not yet been baptized? The power of God is already working in them, but they will still thirst for the waters of baptism should they not receive it. Talk to your friends and your priest about the joy of baptism and entering the Church in its fullness.



### Elements of the Mass: Rogationtide

Rogation Days (from the Latin 'rogare'- to ask) are, in the Western tradition, days set aside in the early Summer for prayer for a good harvest. Historically from around the 5th century, the 'Major Rogation' was on 25th April, adapted from the pagan practice of 'Robigalia': processions through the fields to pray for the preservation of crops. 'Minor Rogations', processions and litanies took place on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before Ascension Day. In England, since the Reformation, only the 'Minor Rogations' have survived, shorn for many years of their processions, although in more years these have been revived in some places. Inevitably, 'Rogationtide' is overshadowed liturgically by Eastertide, but perhaps in these days of climate awareness, it needs to have greater prominence.

The Lord is always showing us the Father, and ever inviting us to share in the very life that the Son lives with the Father. Jesus is always inviting us into God's inner life. Today he calls his disciples 'friends.' This friendship is experienced when they are faithful to their Lord's example of love. Just as the Son is obedient to the Father, so we, when we are obedient to Christ, share in the life of the Father and the Son. This orientation of obedient love is true freedom and true friendship with God. But what kind of friendship is this? What is its character, its identifying mark? Friendship with God is imitating Christ to the uttermost. Today's Gospel reading comes from the Farewell Discourse in St John's Gospel. Jesus imparts to the Apostles (and to us, his Church) his wish for our life together once his hour of perfect accomplishment is come, the hour of the Cross. They are to love one another as he has loved them, and he will love them with the gift of himself to the end. Sacrificial, self-annulling love is the character, the identifying mark, of Christian discipleship - the letting go and casting-off of every authority over our life that is not Christ, that we might live only for him who lived only for us. Christian love is cruciform in shape, it consists not in a filling up but an emptying of self. This is what it means to live in friendship with God.

*Today's Gospel: St John 15: 9-17*

### Collect

Grant, almighty God, that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion these days of joy, which we keep in honour of the risen Lord, and that what we relive in remembrance we may always hold to in what we do. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.