

## The Fifth Sunday of Easter – Sunday 7 May 2023

• Acts 7.55-60; Psalm 31.1-5, 17-18; 1 Peter 2.11-25; John 14.1-14

Taking refuge in the Lord in whom we can put our trust and steadfastly living in faith so that as we face our death, we will not break down but reach out in love to one another. Our Lord is all-powerful and benevolent and calls us to love in obedient faith.

- Pray that we will be obedient children keeping our eyes upon the Lord.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Melanesian Brotherhood, the Melanesian Sisterhood, the Society of St Francis and the Sisters of the Church who minister throughout the Pacific Islands.

*Text:* The Reverend Heather, Associate Priest, St Paul's Cathedral, Sale © Anglican Board of Mission, 2023

### Reflection

The Early church – creating a safe space for all people, sharing their goods so all had enough, meeting together as friends over a meal, learning together to understand more and sharing in prayer with a God who loved equally and unconditionally. Their simplicity of life, and sharing of goods, became a hallmark of Living, Listening and Learning in the Way of Christ as a gathered family of God's diverse people. This has been the lived example of healthy and active faith communities throughout the centuries - communities who focused on living faith, on being peace makers, on justice and equity for all, no matter what the cultural or societal expectations may be. This has been the hallmark of God's call to 'love our neighbour' and to live as Christ taught us to live. It is witnessed today in our Churches' missional groups and agencies, who continue to seek out the marginalised, listen to and speak out for the voiceless, and to stand for justice, inclusion and equity.

In our ecumenical journey together, may we continue to live in this way of justice for all, continue to share the joys and the difficult times that is our human experience, and seek to walk humbly with each other as we partner with Jesus. It is together, that we glimpse the whole body of Christ, not as individuals. Each of our traditions and expressions of church help enrich our understanding and faith, so that we experience God in all our differences and similarities. What a joy it is that we can celebrate God's rich love, the warmth of the Spirit and the friendship we find in Jesus. This is where we find the joy. This is where the strength of hope overrides the grief of despair. This is where, in the space between us, peace beyond our own human understanding, surprises us and energizes us to be Followers of Jesus' Way.

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## Readings - Sunday 7 May 2023 – Fifth Sunday of Easter

### Sentence

'I am the way, and the truth, and the life,' says the Lord. 'No one comes to the Father except through me.' *John 14.6*

### Collect

Everliving God,  
whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life:  
give us grace to love one another,  
to follow in the way of his commandments,  
and to share his risen life;  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

### First Reading: Acts 7.55-60

<sup>55</sup> But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' <sup>57</sup> But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. <sup>58</sup> Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup> While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' <sup>60</sup> Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died.

For the word of the Lord, ***Thanks be to God.***

## **Psalm 31.1-5, 31.17-18**

- <sup>1</sup> To you, Lord, have I come for shelter:  
**let me never be put to shame.**
- <sup>2</sup> O deliver me in your righteousness:  
**incline your ear to me and be swift to save me.**
- <sup>3</sup> Be for me a rock of refuge, a fortress to defend me:  
**for you are my high rock and my stronghold.**
- <sup>4</sup> Lead me and guide me for your name's sake:  
**bring me out of the net that they have secretly laid for me,  
for you are my strength.**
- <sup>5</sup> Into your hands I commit my spirit:  
**you will redeem me, O Lord God of truth.**
- <sup>17</sup> All my days are in your hand:  
**O deliver me from the power of my enemies  
and from my persecutors.**
- <sup>18</sup> Make your face to shine upon your servant:  
**and save me for your mercy's sake.**

## **2nd Reading: 1 Peter 2.11-25**

<sup>11</sup> Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul. <sup>12</sup> Conduct yourselves honourably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honourable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge. <sup>13</sup> For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, <sup>14</sup> or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. <sup>15</sup> For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish. <sup>16</sup> As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. <sup>17</sup> Honour everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honour the emperor. <sup>18</sup> Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh. <sup>19</sup> For it is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup> If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. <sup>21</sup> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you,

leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup> 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' <sup>23</sup> When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. <sup>24</sup> He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup> For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.  
For the word of the Lord, ***Thanks be to God.***

## **Gospel: John 14.1-14**

<sup>1</sup> 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. <sup>4</sup> And you know the way to the place where I am going.' <sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' <sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.' <sup>8</sup> Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup> Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup> Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup> I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.'