

Homily for Sixth Sunday of Easter / Rogation Sunday

“The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands.”

Today is the last Sunday of our Easter celebrations as we look forward to Ascension Day on Thursday, when Jesus was taken back into heaven and Jesus tells us that the Advocate, the Holy Spirit will be sent by God to be with us always. So we find ourselves entering into a time of anticipation.

Today is also Rogation Sunday. Rogation Days are the three weekdays before Ascension Day, but many churches keep Rogation on the preceding Sunday. Rogation Sunday is the day when the Church traditionally offers prayer for God’s blessings on the fruits of the earth and the labours of those who produce our food. This year we might be particularly aware of the need of our agricultural workers as we have heard appeals for people to come and gather the early crops during this difficult time of lockdown and limitations on travelling. This has been one of the difficulties we have faced during this time but a bonus feature seems to be that our planet has had some time to recover a little from the constant assault of air pollution and noise pollution. We have seen smogs lifting and heard the birds singing. We human beings are responsible for planet earth. God has placed it in our hands. We pray that these improvements will be noted and that the urgency of the need for continuing to cut down on emissions and pollution will take on an extra urgency as we see what can be done.

As we give thanks for the signs of improvement in our own environment we continue to ask God’s blessing on those in other countries where the effects of climate breakdown are already causing major changes to the everyday life of inhabitants. This week is also Christian Aid week and we pray for all agencies who work for a more sustainable future for everyone and particularly those in greatest need.

So this week is a week of transition from Easter to Ascension, from winter to looking forward to good harvests, and, please God a time to look forward to a more sustainable future for all.

In our situation with Coronavirus we are also in a time of transition – there are possibilities and plans for coming out of lockdown and some people will already have returned to work this week.

Transition is always a time of uncertainty we do not know quite how things will go, we have hopes and plans but will they work, will we take the right action. I love the Greeks, with their altar to an unknown God. Being Greeks they must have thought it through and come to the conclusion, well you know let’s cover all the bases.

But in this we have no uncertainty for the God who made the world and everything in it is known to us in Christ Jesus.

Jesus says: You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. This is the promise fulfilled in the Holy Spirit: On that day you will know that I am in my father, and you in me, and I in you. In this way we are the church, as Mark said last week quoting St Paul, we are living stones, our God does not live in shrines made by human hands but is alive through the spirit in us. And so we can rejoice and be in the world to share Jesus commandment of love with our neighbours near and far and with all creation.