



Third Sunday after Easter

A Short Reflective Service of Prayer for those at home

Open our hearts O God,
that we may receive you anew this day.
Open our lips O Christ,
that our lips may sing your praises.
Open our souls O Holy Spirit,
that we may devote our lives to your
praise and service. AMEN

A Reading from the New Testament

'Life among the Believers'

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by
the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they
would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any
had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke
bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,
praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.
And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 2 verses 42 – end

Light your own Candle
(please ensure this is done safely)

Pause for a moment of quiet

Pause for Thought

The start of it all, *'And they devoted themselves.....'*

Today's reading focuses on the lives of those first believers, and clearly the writer of the Book of Acts wants to convey the passion, the 'devotion' of the believers to a life which was shared commonly and in communion with Christ.

I often hear people talking about their passion; and if you know a person well, its not difficult to see what they are enthusiastic about.

With the 'Spring' upon us, colour and beauty abounds in some people's gardens, others, like mine look more like a jungle!
You know instinctively those who are devoted to working hard in their garden, the results are there for all to see.

Sometimes our passion extends to things like 'golf,' how many times have I heard someone say, 'I am a golf widow!' Those bitten by the bug to play golf often naturally see their game improve and their handicap go down with regular practice.

Of course what I am saying is not rocket science!
If our hearts are devoted to something, generally speaking we would expect to see some results from our labours.

What is of note amongst those first believers during the early years of the Christian Church is that their passion, their devotion to faith in Christ benefits not just themselves but those around them. This common aim to live a good, generous and godly life became an inspiration to others, this was how the Church started out.

We have seen in our communities during this difficult period of human history those whose hearts are motivated to help others, to devote themselves to making a difference to the world often at personal sacrifice.

When we look back at this time, we will have many personal memories, how we coped with the isolation, the loss of family or friends, what became important in our lives, how we channeled our time and maybe how we helped someone in need.

It takes something profound to help us see a different future; to look beyond the things we devote our time and passion to (which mostly please only ourselves).

As we start to think what the future might look like 'post' Covid19, will it be the start of a new era, a more selfless one?

I hope we will see a desire to build a world that will promote the importance of a common life devoted to the wellbeing of all. Such ethics are not new for they are at the root of Christian love and life; if it takes a human crisis to remind ourselves of what is really important in this mortal life then only good can come of it.

May the Peace and Hope of Christ be with you all.

Pause for a moment of quiet

Bless your people O God,

and let the light of your love shine upon us always. AMEN

A Call to Prayer

As we come to prayer today just give a moment to think 'Where would we be..'

'Love' is an impossible word and yet without love...

where would society be without those whose passion is to show
justice, grace and mercy to all people?

Where would our environment be without those with a reverence for all creation?

Where would the lonely, the anxious, the ill and the dying be without those
who are devoted to caring for suffering humanity?

Where would we be without faith to believe in all that God can and is doing,
without those devoted to praying for the healing of the world?

At times 'love' may seem impossible, but all things are possible with God.

May the Lord of Love,
who is more powerful than all that can harm us,
grant to us and those we pray for today
his healing and his hope.
For the peace that is to come,
and for our tomorrows,
may we remember we do not walk alone -
for Christ never leaves our side nor forsakes us;
may God strengthen our faith to believe it is so. AMEN

Prayers for the World

Who will we pray for today? Let us name them.

(Silently name those we pray for)

O Christ, we cry out to you today,
let your cross speak of your great love, both to us and to your world.
In dying for us you accepted the pain and hurts of the whole creation,
the arms of your cross stretch out around our broken world
bringing peace, healing and reconciliation.
There is no pain in our hearts or in the world you do not know of,
and no place in all creation your love cannot touch or transform.
Give us strength in your victory over death to grow in the way of your love
which does not despair but keeps sowing the seeds of hope.
Come, take our hands, our hearts and our lives O Christ
and bless them with passion to live according to your will,
being devoted to one another and to the work of your living church.

AMEN

The Lord's Prayer

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

Closing Prayer

As new growth breaks through the soil,
as the blossoms burst forth on the trees
may the seeds of your love travel to the ends of the earth
bringing joy, love, hope, healing and peace to all people.
AMEN

Let us bless the Lord, thanks be to God. Alleluia Amen!