

## Reflection for the Seventh Sunday of Easter

I rarely re-use a homily in its original form, but old homilies do provide ideas, insights and thoughts for new ones. However, in thinking about what to say today I came across a homily for this particular Sunday which was never preached. It's from six years ago, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020, which was, of course, right in the middle of our first Covid lockdown which ran from 23<sup>rd</sup> March until 23<sup>rd</sup> June. Six years on I think it offers quite a lot of food for thought so I considered it worth reading today. So, think yourself back into the middle of our first lockdown.

Today's first reading tells us that *"after Jesus was taken up into heaven the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet.....And when they had entered they went up to the upper room where they were staying."* This weekend the eleven remaining apostles *"together with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers and sisters"* are in lockdown, waiting for a new normal, a new beginning. And during this time, we are told that *"they were devoting themselves to prayer."*

What will this new normal be like for the apostles? When will it come about? How different will life be without Jesus? And what will happen to them when they are clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit as Jesus has promised? This weekend as the apostles remain in lockdown these questions go unanswered and there is great uncertainty as they wait. No doubt the atmosphere is charged with anticipation and excitement but also with anxiety and insecurity.

And so, to our present situation today, (lockdown 2020). There are many voices saying that life will not be the same again, that the world has changed forever. Will people be friendlier, kinder, more neighbourly? Will we be more appreciative of our families, elder relatives, friends and neighbours? Will we value carers and key workers more, not simply with a weekly round of applause or a medal as the Prime Minister suggested this week, but with fair pay, adequate resources and stability in their residence here if they are migrants? Will we keep pollution down, the air clean, the skies clear, the birds audibly singing? And how will we meet the cost of it all? Will the burden fall fairly and proportionately protecting the poorer members of our societies? Like the apostles in Jerusalem we wait in our homes with anticipation and excitement but also with anxiety and uncertainty.

Only if we allow ourselves to be clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord will we emerge from lockdown ready for our new beginning, ready to build our new normal in line with the will of the Creator. In the meantime, like the apostles in their lockdown, let us devote ourselves to prayer. - A little food for thought!!!

Back to the present day, 2026. Here in catholic Halifax the Bishop calls upon us to plan for a new normal. There are many questions sloshing around. We too must be clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit as we go forward.