

Reflection for 7th Sunday of Easter.

I woke early this morning and in a semi-state of alertness attempted to pray the Rosary. Normally I do so partly as a means of helping me to go back to sleep, but also because I place all that comes flooding into my mind in the hands of Our Blessed Lady. I entrust the sick for whom I am concerned to her maternal intercession; I entrust my preoccupations and anxieties to her safekeeping. I find that the rhythm of the Rosary helpful as a means of calming my heart and mind and restoring a balance, a harmony.

The first reading of today's Mass describes the apostles returning, after our Lord's ascension, to the upper room in Jerusalem, awaiting the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. We are told by Saint Luke, the author of the 'Acts of the Apostles', that the apostles "***joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus.***"

It is good to reflect on Mary's presence with the apostles in the upper room as they await the coming of the Paraclete. Mary had given birth to her Son and, along with Saint Joseph, had carefully nurtured Him in every detail of His life. Now she is present awaiting the birthday of the Church, when the Holy Spirit "***opened to all peoples the knowledge of God and brought together the many languages of the earth in profession of the one faith***" (Preface for Pentecost Sunday)

Our Lady continues to assist the members of the Church in our task of bearing joyful witness to the presence of Jesus Christ. She has made room for each and everyone of us in her heart, especially when we are troubled or distressed. We know from the example of our own Mothers and Fathers how we instinctively turn to them to share our hopes and our fears, our joys and our disappointments. How often have our Mums dried our tears and soothed our burdened hearts? How often have our parents made sacrifices to benefit us in our youth? I know that for several years my Father worked nights at the Jaguar Car Factory in Coventry to provide for us, his children.

It is true to say that our Lady has an even greater love for us spiritually and that she constantly intercedes for us with the warmth of a Mother's love.

I am sure that she is praying for all her children at this time as we await the coming Feast of Pentecost, the birthday of the Church.

At the time of the Annunciation the angel Gabriel told Mary, in response to Mary's question "How can this be since I am a Virgin?", "***The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow, and so the child to be born will be Holy, and will be called Son of God.***"

Mary is sometimes referred to as "The Spouse of the Holy Spirit" because she willingly allowed the Holy Spirit to wed her to God and to His plan to save humankind.

We also, since our Baptism, are Temples of the Holy Spirit, and we also are part of God's continuing plan to bring the Gospel to our neighbour. Sometimes I ask how can the Holy Spirit possibly make use of me to further God's purpose? Then I realise that this is precisely why I need the Holy Spirit to enter my heart and mind more fully, since it is His intention to enkindle within me the fire of God's love.

I take heart from Jesus's prayer in today's Gospel (and we may make this personal and in place of 'them' and 'those' place our own name)

"I pray for them; I am not praying for the world but for those You have given Me, because they belong to You: all I have is yours and all You have is Mine, and in them I am glorified. I am not in the world any longer, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You." (John 17:10-11a)

"Holy Mary, Mother of God,

You have given the world its true light,

Jesus, your son, the Son of God.

You abandoned yourself completely to God's call

and thus became a wellspring of the goodness

which flows forth from Him.

Show us Jesus, lead us to Him, Teach us to know and love Him,

So that we, too, can become capable of true love,

And be fountains of living water,

In the midst of a thirsting world." Amen.