

We are between Easter and Pentecost, with Jesus returning to God the Father in between. The Gospel reading is, once again, taking us back to the Last Supper, and Jesus trying to prepare his disciples for what is to come, his absence and yet the presence of God in the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Acts we hear about some of the more immediate effects of the power of the Holy Spirit and in Revelations we move to some point in the future when we will be with God in his holy place.

We hear again about love, but not just a fairy tale romantic love, rather one that requires commitment and obedience. This is the love of faith, the love for God Almighty through a relationship with him, the God who lived on earth here among us and then left us with the gift of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit to help us, to remind us of his words. This is the love of a God who died for us. Jesus both talks about love and lives it out. He gives us commandments about love, echoing the Ten

Commandments, but showing us that love underlies them all, love for our God and for our neighbour, but he also said explicitly that we are to love one another so that everyone will know that we are his disciples.

Just as it was difficult for the disciples to understand what he was talking about and for them to carry out these commandments of love, so do we find it difficult to love in this way. Difficult to love God, difficult to love our neighbours and difficult to love each other. But, thankfully, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will remind us of Jesus' words and help us to obey them.

Was it reassurance that Jesus was giving to his disciples when he said "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you", or was it that peace comes from faith and love? Perhaps both, but feeling at peace with yourself, the world and God is a precious thing, rare possibly.

We pray for peace, usually for the world, but perhaps we should be praying for peace for ourselves, the peace of mind that comes from

deep, true faith, trusting God for everything and everyone we hold dear, being free from anxiety and worry. Jesus reminds us not to let our hearts be troubled, not to be afraid; but that is so difficult, worrying can become almost second nature. We can worry about anything and everything, and even saying, and believing, that it is all in God's hands does not always stop anxious thoughts.

And then there is world peace, what can I do for all the troubled areas in the world? Why does prayer sometimes not feel enough? Why does it sometimes feel that our prayers aren't being answered? I don't know. I know all the answers about God's plans, timing and ways being different from ours, but I'm not always satisfied with that. In Matthew 5:9 Jesus says "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." Sons of God because we love and not hate, sons of God who work to bring the kingdom here on earth, sons of God who see the face of Jesus in everyone they meet, sons of God who can forgive as they have been forgiven?

The Archbishop of Canterbury has said: "We're always calling for peace: that's the call of the Church. Peace with God, peace with each other, peace in the world." Our call is to work for peace, to pray for peace to believe that peace will come, it is easy to substitute the word love for peace and find that that is still the call of the Church.

He also writes: "As God changes us in prayer he drives us out to be justice-seekers, peacemakers, healers and bringers of good news." Our relationship with God has to change us and how we deal with each other and the world. Our love drives our ministry, our love makes us turn to God when all is black and when all is joyful, our love makes us want to share it all with others.

It is God, through the Holy Spirit, who helps us to change as we grow in relationship with him, and because of his love for us and his world he inspires us to seek justice, be peacemakers, heal and share the good news of his love.