

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, MUMBLES
Reflection for
Seventh Sunday of Eastertide Year A, 24 May 2020
(May be used for Home Prayer Service)
Dominican Friars, Swansea

This reflection may be used during the home prayer service. Please see the home prayer service sheet for details.

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS CHURCH

We have joyfully celebrated the Solemnity of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven. At his ascension into heaven, Christ has not left us orphans, but he has gone to sit on his divine throne in heaven to intercede for us. This is what we profess in our Creed. Christ has gone to take the glory which he has always had from the foundations of the world (cf. Jn 17:5). When we get to heaven, we shall behold, not just a glimpse as witnessed by Peter, James and John (cf. Mt 17:1-13) but the fullness of his glory.

Jesus Prays for the Church: Before his ascension, Jesus promised not to leave his disciples orphans. He has kept his promise by always interceding for the Church and the whole world. Today's gospel reading relates how Jesus heartily prays for his disciples and indeed the Church. St Cyril referred to this prayer as the Priestly Prayer of Jesus. He is the High Priest who intercedes for his people (cf. Heb 4:14).

Jesus Teaches the Church to pray: If the Church prays, then it was her Lord who taught her how to pray. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus prompts us to pray to the Father saying, whatever you ask the Father in my name, I will do it (cf. Jn 14:13-14). Christ taught us to call God our Father in teaching us the Lord's Prayer, the prayer which unites all Christians in the world (cf. Mt 6:9-13). In fact, Luke presents the Lord's Prayer in the context of a request from Christ's disciples (cf. Lk 11:1-4). More so, in Matthew 18:19-20, our Lord teaches us that he is always present in the Church, especially at her liturgical celebrations. The Spirit of God sent by Christ also helps the Church to make the right petitions in her prayer (cf. Rm 8:26).

The Church Prays as a People of God: The liturgy is the public worship of the Church where Christ acts as the High Priest. At the liturgy, the Church as the People of God (clergy and lay faithful) offers spiritual sacrifices through Christ the High Priest to the Father. Rightly so, the Church teaches that the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed. It is the font from which all

her power flows (Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10). However, The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. For in it is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 11). Meanwhile, the sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church (Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 9). The Church evangelises through her children and teaches them to pray always (cf. 1 Thess 5:17).

The Virgin Mary Prays with the Church: The theme of prayer is also reflected in the First Reading. There, we read that the apostles of Jesus together with Mary, the mother of Jesus, were devoted in prayer in expectation of the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:12-14). At her assumption into heaven, she continues to pray with the Church.

The Beauty of Christian Prayer: Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God (CCC 2559). Deep in our hearts, we feel God's fatherly love and care. In prayer, we express our gratitude to God for all the good things we enjoy: the breadth of life, brightness of the sun and beauty of the sea and of all God's creation.

In prayer, we also place our burdens on Christ who has said, come to me all you who are overladen, and I will give you rest (cf. Mt 11:28). During this pandemic, we seek refuge in God who alone can heal us and bring us back to our churches and fill our mouths with laughter again (cf. Ps 126:1-2). With the Psalmist we pray, "God of hosts, bring us back. Let your face shine on us and we shall be saved" (80:3).

As Christians, we pray, not because we know what tomorrow holds but because we know Him who holds tomorrow. Thus, prayer is an expression of our complete trust in God who does not abandon us in our challenges. In utter humility, we then pray, "Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference" (Written by Reinhold Niebuhr).