

Sunday 1 June 2025
Evensong on the Seventh Sunday of Easter
Sunday after Ascension

Liverpool Parish Church

OT: Isaiah 44.1-8
NT: Ephesians 4.7-16

'I knew if we could get to the church, we would be safe.'

Not my words but those of the mother of the family we took into church following the appalling incident on Water Street last Monday. Some of us had spent all afternoon locked in the upper room of this church once the crowds broke through the gates and filled the gardens to try and see the parade. It was no longer safe for us to go outside until the bus had passed and the throng dispersed. At that point, we could go out and help those in need.

All week, the events of Monday and those in the Church's calendar have been spinning around my head. On Thursday, we kept the feast of the Ascension, when Jesus, his earthly mission complete, returned to the Father and his rightful place in the kingdom of God.

At that point, the apostles returned to the upper room, unsure of what would happen next and still fearful of the religious authorities who wanted to stamp out this new sect before it took hold. And they, like us this week, resorted to prayer. Together placing themselves in the presence of God and trusting in his grace to show them the way forward.

This church is open for prayer every day, and has been for more than 800 years, only held back by the Blitz bombing which made the building unsafe. On Tuesday, with the Paschal candle lit to remind us of God's overwhelming love for humanity, some of us came together to celebrate an additional Eucharist and to pray for all those involved in Monday's horror.

Next Sunday, we will keep the great feast of Pentecost, when emboldened by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the apostles threw open the doors and went out to preach the gospel and provide pastoral care to all those in need.

So we went from being locked in, to going out to help a family in shock, to bring them comfort, to reunite them as they had been split up in the chaos, and hopefully to show that their faith was well placed in believing that safety and care could be found in the church.

God is always at work in this place but he has most powerfully made his presence known this week. In this evening's reading Isaiah says: *'Do not fear, or be afraid;
Have I not told you from of old and declared it? You are my witnesses!'*

The common feature of Monday's events for me, was to be present. Present for one another when we were virtually trapped in church and then present for those who needed a cup of tea, a safe haven and a listening ear. And we can only present where we are needed, we can only be God's witnesses, if we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit, if we trust enough to let him be our guide.

So, this is our prayer for the coming week as we too wait for the gift of the Spirit, but let me issue a word of warning from William Temple: *'When we pray, 'Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire', we had better know what we are about.'* As he goes on to say, it is not our will but God's that he will enable so don't expect any easy life with no challenges and troubles. The apostles can testify to that! But only by living by the Spirit, only by speaking truth in love, will we live a life that is full and fruitful.

Revd Michelle Montrose