

**Sunday 27 July 2025**  
**The Sixth Sunday after Trinity**

**Liverpool Parish Church**

**OT: Genesis 18. 20-32**

**NT: Colossians 2. 6-15**

**Gp: Luke 11. 1-13**

From our Gospel today: 'One of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray', as John taught his disciples'. The fact that Jesus had disciples seems to be completely secure in the tradition. There is no New Testament scholar who doubts that Jesus called disciples and regarded them as a distinct group. So, it makes sense for Jesus to give his followers a special prayer and to speak of them as a new community, a 'little flock'. In that prayer, Jesus tells his disciples to call God 'Father' and pray for the coming of God's kingdom. As such, the prayer comes from within the very heart of Jewish longing for the kingdom but shot through with how Jesus understood that kingdom himself. In the book of Exodus (19: 6), God tells the people of Israel 'you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation', words that were spoken to the people in the wilderness and in a sense, they are spoken again by Jesus to his disciples and to us now through his prayer – a kingdom of priests.

The priest in the Old Testament was the focus of everything that the people gave to God: he gave thanks, he made sacrifices, and he made peace between God and the world. So, for the people to be called as a priestly people is for them to be called to give on behalf of the world: to give thanks and to make peace. Yet, as St Paul tells us so forcefully in our second lesson today, we cannot achieve this simply through good deeds or the following of the law alone. That alone cannot achieve peace. There may be repeated offerings year after year, there may be particular philosophies around or those who are only keen to be circumcised, etc...but they cannot make the important change that is required. And so it is that the calling of God's priestly people narrows down to the great high priest, Jesus Christ, for, as Paul says today: 'in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily'.

It is no surprise therefore, that in our liturgy we always say the Lord's prayer just before we receive the bread and the wine of the Eucharist. There is a small and helpful book called *Being Christian* by Rowan Williams (which I recommend to you to read), in which he tells us that praying the Lord's prayer just before Communion is not just 'a bit of muttered devotion before we start on our way to the altar, but one of the supreme transitions in the drama of the entire service' (p. 56). At that moment, we are affirming that we are able to call God 'father' because of Jesus in our midst in the sacrament, or as St Paul puts it: 'we were buried with him and raised with him' and therefore we are now adopted children of God.

When we stand at the altar and pray the Lord's prayer, we are called then to embody what we pray, to be instruments of God's Kingdom and Christ's peace. We, like the Hebrew priests, use the words of the Book of Common Prayer, 'make prayers and supplications and

give thanks for all'. The Church then is above all the place where prayer and supplication and thanksgiving happen. If it is not a place for such things, it is not a Church anymore. But what we do here is not simply our own doing. It is what Christ is doing. Remember how St Paul says today: 'Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement...puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together...grows with a growth that is from God'. Instead of thinking highly of ourselves as 'righteous achievers', let us remember that we are not the gathering of the saints; rather, we are here, I am here, you are here, because we are 'sinners' and Christ is still the pillar of fire in our midst; he is the one who sustains our prayers and our offering, despite everything we do.

So, what is required of us in this place? First, we are required to know that it is Christ who has made peace and not us. We are therefore not to be anxious (even when the arrival of our new rector is delayed). Christ has made peace and our lives rests on that and nothing else matters. Similarly, when we are busy trying to achieve peace and witnessing to peace in the world, as many of us agonise at the moment at the scenes coming out of Gaza and elsewhere, our efforts must not be characterised by anxious striving, or desperate activism, thinking that we may have the right passion to get it all sorted now. Christ has made peace and in him lives the fullness of God; our concern and prayers ought to be accompanied with the knowledge that the world is already in good hands, the pillar of fire, Christ, in the midst of those who are suffering making peace by his prayer and sacrifice, for which we join together at this altar. In the midst of our manifold tensions, struggles and uncertainties locally, nationally and internationally, it matters more than we can imagine if we allow ourselves to be drawn by the pillar of fire, the presence of Christ at the altar. Here is our peace.

By doing that, we become the place where God is to be found, that is what the Church is for after all – a sanctuary, a place of refuge. When the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem together with Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem went to Gaza city last week to be with the small little flock of the beleaguered ancient Christian community, they spoke of it as a sanctuary where Christ is to be found in the midst of the rubble, a place where those who need a home but have none may find it. So, we are not to become some kind of a closed holy space. It is to be the temple whose doors are open to everyone, regardless of who they are – Jew or Greek, male or female, gay or straight. Of course, it is easier said than done, because we quickly turn to anxiety and anxious striving, as if Christ had not died and been raised. We might even find ourselves anxious and awkward in sitting next to some people around us here, whose company might make us anxious too. It is much easier to close the doors on some; but we are called to be a kingdom, where forgiveness, and feeding happen – that is what the Lord's prayer tells us to do – so that the world may be invited, may come and see and be transfigured.

So, as we continue to wait for our new rector to arrive, instead of being anxious, let us pray that he will help us through his friendship to reveal the face of God and be the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. Are we friends of the earth and the people around us? We can be so, if we are true disciples and friends of Christ and one another. As we say the Lord's prayer shortly, we receive Communion, let us remember and pray that we are called to be the people among whom the prayer of Christ may be seen and heard, where the peace of Christ is tangible, where the pillar of fire is seen in our midst. With whatever doubts or anxieties, we know He is in our midst.

**Fr Yazid Said**