

Lectionary readings: Acts 1: 6-14; Psalm 68: 1-10, 32-35; 1 Peter 4: 12-14, 5: 6-11; John 17: 1-11 (The Ascension)

For reflection and prayer

- **Acts 1:** I confess that I don't understand this passage. But what I do know is that the disciples had a real experience of the presence of Christ with them after the resurrection, not just one, but many encounters with the living Christ, when they were aware of His presence with them in a different way from when He had been with them before. Increasingly, I am convinced that doctrines and dogma - all the things that divide people and cause dissension - are less important than experiencing the living, transforming power of God in our day to day lives. I'm sure that, as the disciples stood gazing into heaven, it was all a great mystery to them, as it is to us. But what we are called to be and to do is to be aware of the presence of God in our lives to change us so that we become the people God created us to be - knowing how loved we are, and allowing that love to heal us, and then to reach out with that same love to others. Each one of us can have encounters with Jesus every day this week, not in extraordinary ways, but in the ordinary, everyday experiences of life, as we open ourselves to Him.
- **Psalm 68:** Here are a few verses from 'Psalms for Praying' to reflect on: v1-4: *'Impregnate us with Love, O Comforter. Let our fears be transformed; let all that keeps us separated and confused flee. As smoke is blown away, so let our fears rise up before You; as wax melts before fire, let our fears be melted by Love. Then*

we will be released from bondage; we will exult before the Beloved; we will be jubilant with joy.' v32-33: *'Sing to the Beloved...whose voice is heard in the Silence.'*

- **1 Peter 4-5:** When life gets really difficult, don't jump to the conclusion that God isn't with you. Instead, be glad. You are being refined, purified, sharing in God's glory as you share in Christ's suffering. So says Peter. Here is a quotation from 'Living Stones' on this passage: *'To undergo suffering beautifully, by the grace of God, is to have the Spirit of God in all His glory resting upon us, and the privilege of witnessing to God's strength and capacity to transform and redeem anything.'* Quite a challenge for us to let our faith affect radically our daily living, even the worst experiences life presents us with.
- **John 17:** Prayer and community are important. Jesus prays that we may be one - of one heart and mind - as He and the Father are one. We are invited to live the unity of God. Jesus says in v4: *'I brought glory to You here on earth by doing everything You told me to do.'* Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could say: I have been all God called me to be, and I have done what I was sent into the world to do? And what is that work we have been called to do? To reveal the glory of God, to manifest the presence of God in our lives. Irenaeus, the first Bishop of Lyons in France, wrote at the end of the 2nd century: *'The glory of God is the human person fully alive.'* Alive with the presence of God, alive with the love of God. If we, the church, are alive with the presence of God, and therefore alive with the love of God, we will be one in heart and mind, full of love for one another, recognising God's glory in one another. May it be so, for thus will God's Kingdom come on earth.