



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Easter 6 2020 11 am

John 14.15-21

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Alleluia!*

Today, is the last Sunday before Ascension Day, the crucial 'staging post', between Easter and Pentecost.

St John records that, as Jesus prepares to take his physical leave of his disciples, he promises them the Gift of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, the One who will *abide* with them for ever.

Central to the theology of St John's Gospel, is his understanding of how God the Father is at work in creation; how God is with us, among us, at one with us.

You will remember how St John opens his Gospel: "*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God*".

From the very beginning – *before* the very beginning, father, Son and Spirit 'mutual indwell', a 'mutually abide': an

indwelling, an abiding of life and love.

Jesus tells his disciples - and all who come after them - that they and we will be embraced by this mutual indwelling, eternal abiding dynamic life and love which Jesus names Holy Spirit, Advocate, the Spirit of Truth.

For St John, it is through our enfolding by this divine abiding that we come to know God.

God the Father, in Christ, enfolds, embraces us, in the love and life we call Holy Spirit.

God in Christ IS 'Emmanuel', God caring so much for his fallen and wayward creation that he sends his only begotten Son, the eternal Word who is with the Father and the Spirit from all eternity and to all eternity, not just to 'visit' his people - like some form of alien life from outer space - but to 'dwell' with us, to 'abide' with us, to embrace us and in that embrace to hold us in the life and love of the Trinity.

Sam Wells, the Vicar of St Martins-in-the-Fields, has written that Jesus' whole earthly ministry was nothing if not a courageous 'abiding', a solidarity with human life.

During his earthly life and ministry, Jesus was the Good Shepherd who stayed, who abided with his sheep when others ran away.

Jesus was the teacher who sat and spent time with his disciples gently teaching them how pray and opening the Scriptures for them.

Jesus is the Good Samaritan who shares in the divine compassion, rescuing and journeying and providing for the wounded and the broken bringing us to a place of safety where we can find our wholeness and our healing.

But, as Jesus prepares to take his leave of his disciples, he invites them once again to abide in his love and to live out that abiding by loving one another – even to the point of laying down their lives for one another if that is what it takes.

And to help them – to help us – as he prepares to take his physical leave of the disciples, God in Christ, promises the gift of the Holy Spirit.

God so loved the world that, not only did he send his only begotten Son into the world to abide with us, but God so loved the world that he died for us, rose again for us and, after the Ascension of Jesus, sends the eternal abiding indwelling Holy Spirit to be with us at all times and in all places for as long as time and place have meaning.

So, as we prepare to celebrate the Feast of the Ascension on Thursday and, ten days later the great Feast of Pentecost, may we know God's abiding and indwelling Spirit with us, and may that Spirit not only lead us into truth, but equip us with all that we need to love; all that we need to live; all that we need to die.

Even so, Come Holy Spirit of God, fill the hearts of your faithful people and kindle in us the fire of your love and renew the face of the earth! Alleluia!