

Homily for the seventh Sunday of Easter The Sunday after Ascension Day

I think it's important that we keep the message of Ascension Day in our minds as we explore our reading today.

After Ascension Day the disciples were left with the question:- What do we do now?

When Jesus was alive they knew he was on a mission to save the world and they knew it was going to be their job to follow him and help him but when he died they were left wondering "What now?"

Then when he rose from the grave, he showed them that he even had powers over death and at that they must have felt a huge surge of hope. If Jesus had power over death then anything was possible.

After the Resurrection Jesus was back with them so one of them asked when he would make everything right in Israel. "Is now the time?"

Jesus replied:-

"Only God knows when that will happen.

It is not for you to know. But I have a job for you.

God will give you great power - the power of his Holy Spirit - and then I need you to do my work on earth. I need you to be my representatives not just here, in Jerusalem, but all over the world."

Then before any of the disciples had a chance to say anything, Jesus was lifted up, up into heaven and out of sight. In the text we read how two angels appeared and asked the disciples:-

"What are you looking at? Jesus has gone back up into heaven and one day he'll come back the same way."

So that left the disciples with a question:-

What do we do now?

They had been following Jesus

They had watched what he did,

They had listened to what he said

But now they felt as though they were on their own.

It seemed Jesus had left them to get on with it on their own. But perhaps not!

Perhaps they would remember that Jesus had promised them they would be given the power of the Holy Spirit.

But, I wonder did they know what that meant?

My guess is they had no idea how that was to happen.

I think they must have been left in some confusion.

They had just witnessed an amazing sight.

Perhaps they were excited by what they had witnessed and maybe a bit frightened of what was to come.

So they did what seemed sensible. They stuck together and went back to Jerusalem to wait, and pray and see what happened next!

So the disciples now had a mission of their own.

That was:- to do Jesus' work!

But what exactly was Jesus' work?

They must have thought about all the different things Jesus had done.

A task for you!

Just imagine you are in church. Sit in your seat and look round the building! If you look closely you will see evidence of the things that Jesus did:-

Symbols of his passion.

Pictures.

Stories.

In fact evidence of everything he did.

I wonder from what we see can we answer the question:- What was Jesus' mission?

He came to heal.

He came to love.

He came to share.

He came to save.

He came to give us eternal life.

So if this was Jesus' work or if you like Jesus' mission then this is what he told his disciples to do for him.

This is what he told his followers - and us - to do for him.

So I wonder what that might mean for us?

Are we here to:-

To worship God.

To pray for others.

To care for one another.

To sit and listen.

Undoubtedly yes!

Or is there more?

How can we do Jesus' work in the world today?

Well there are all those that I have mentioned but what about:-

Supporting the church in Mara

Fellowship Homes

Visiting the sick.

Serving the church.

Taking on responsibilities for the church.

Even attending meetings! (When they are allowed!)

Witnessing to our neighbours and family.

Giving our time to our uniformed organisations

Supporting our local schools

Producing and delivering our magazines

Compiling the weekly newsletter

Setting up for services

Washing the linen

Welcoming people to services

Serving the teas

Supporting the pantomime members

But is there still more we could do?

Only you can answer that.

Doing Jesus' work in the world is the mission of the church. That means it's our mission.

That is - "should we choose to accept it!"

Those words seem familiar!

But is it "*Mission Impossible?*"

I wonder if any of the disciples thought that it was "mission impossible."

Maybe they thought it might be beyond their capabilities. Or at least a "tall order!"

Talking about "Mission Impossible" let's just think about different kinds of mission.

For instance the kind given to spies and agents like

James Bond. I must say I really enjoy the Bond movies.

But remember he was never sent to do anything without first getting the right tools. - The gadgets!

I think they were the best bits!

Cars that had special bits.

Pens that could do all sorts of things.

A watch with a laser beam.

All amazing.

Bond was never sent out without the essential equipment.

When Jesus gave his church its mission, he knew that we would also need the essential equipment. We would need special help.

So what is that special help?

Well first there is the power of God the Father who made us. Ps 68: 34,35

"Ascribe power to God whose majesty is over Israel; and whose power is in the skies. Awesome is God in his sanctuary, the God of Israel; he gives power and strength to his people."

Then there is the power of God the Son, who was one of us. 1 Peter 5:10

"The God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you."

Finally there is the power of God the Holy Spirit, who is active in the world and in our hearts. Acts 1:18

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

This is what changes "Mission Impossible" into "Mission Possible." God promises each of us his power and to be with us every step of the way - so we are never alone. On Ascension Day we remembered how Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be with us always.

Next week is Pentecost or Whit Sunday.

Wow what is going to happen next!!!!

"Your mission is ********* should you choose to accept it!!!!"

Rev. Stephen