

St Peter's, Ealing  
Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> MAY 2016  
Easter 7

"I pray for those who believe in me through the disciples' witness"

We had a fabulous Ascension Day celebration this year.

The Archbishop's of Canterbury and York have asked us to pray for evangelism in our nation and to begin that prayer on Ascension Day continuing to Pentecost which is next Sunday. In response to that call Fr Justin had a brilliant idea for the Parish of the North Ealing Group; St Stephens, St Barnabas and St Peter's.

Ascension Day, like much of our midweek worship, is waning in its observation. We three parishes have a faithful few who observe it, why not join forces and pray for our community together with a prayer walk? Prayer walking is where you walk through your area praying for things you see or know about. So as you go along you pray for a school you pass or those who use a particular open space or maybe you pass someone's home you know who is in need. You pray out loud to give ownership to your prayer and then move on.

A group of over twenty, made up of members from each parish, set off from St Stephen's winding their way through the streets of St Stephen's parish heading for St Barnabas, praying for the community, the homes they passed and the institutions. A few more joined the group at St Barnabas and prayers continued to be said through the streets of the area heading for St Peter's where we shared in Mass, wine and our traditional firework. In the end nearly sixty of us gathered, prayed and worshipped together from across North Ealing, celebrating Our Lord's Ascension whilst witnessing to the presence of God amongst us.

Do you know what, at least in my view, made this such a powerful and joyous event? The fact that three quite different churches came together, shared together in their own traditions without query or judgement, and prayed. Praying together must be the key to the Archbishop's call to evangelism in our nation. Too often we have focused on differences rather than seeking out that

which joins us together. Our identity is important to us but that shouldn't stop us from sharing.

In today's Gospel we hear Jesus praying for us, you and me. He prayed that we may be one as he and the Father are one. Jesus prayed for all those who heard his word through the ministry of his followers. Jesus understood that the coming of the kingdom of God needed the sharing of God's love between people, regardless of race or creed or colour. Jesus didn't qualify who might hear his word.

In the passage from John today Jesus clearly has his sights on us. Not someone in the past but you and me. His prayer is that we, the children of God, may be one with God as Jesus is one with God. This is a profound shift in understanding our relationship with God and God's relationship not only with us but with the whole of creation. I have to admit to you I have found this whole section in John rather tedious in the past. I struggled to make sense of it with all the 'I in you and you in me and they in them' stuff. But what I've missed is the intrinsic change in relationship Jesus is praying for, where the place of the law, the Torah and ritual of the temple worship is moved and we are left facing God in the stark reality of our sinfulness and his loving forgiveness for us. Where we are stood as if on a train platform, the mist of the steam pistons is lifting and we are seeing each other clearly for the first time and it is marvellous.

The Archbishops ask us to pray, "Thy Kingdom Come"

([www.thykingdomcome.co.uk](http://www.thykingdomcome.co.uk)) in our communities, for our friends and family, for ourselves. To see in prayer a way of coming closer to God, of getting others to share in that same new relationship with God. This could be so exciting, if only we would take part. Can I encourage you to come to Mass on Wednesday evening? To come a pray together for our community, for each other and for ourselves. And if you can't do that, to take some time in this week to pray that the Kingdom of God may come near and that we all will be blessed with a closer walk with God.