

FIFTH FRIDAY IN EASTERTIDE

15TH MAY 2020



Saint Isidore the Farmer (1070 - 1130) was born near Madrid to very poor parents. He was a labourer and later a bailiff on the estates of a landowner called Juan de Vargas. He was noted for his piety. He died on 15 May 1130.

Devotion to him started shortly after his death, when many people who had known him were still alive.

He is patron saint of Madrid.

A Reading From the Acts of the Apostles 15: 5-35

(This is a longer version of the reading at Mass, which is in Bold Italics)

Certain members of the **Pharisees'** party who had become believers objected, insisting that the pagans should be circumcised and instructed to keep the Law of Moses. The apostles and elders met to look into the matter, and after the discussion had gone on a long time, **Peter** stood up and addressed the apostles and the elders.

'My brothers,' he said 'you know perfectly well that in the early days God made his choice among you: the pagans were to learn the Good News from me and so become believers. In fact God, who can read everyone's heart, showed his approval of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as he had to us. God made no distinction between them and us, since he purified their hearts by faith. It would only provoke God's anger now, surely, if you imposed on the disciples the very burden that neither we nor our ancestors were strong enough to support? Remember, we believe that we are saved in the same way as they are: through the grace of the Lord Jesus.'

This silenced the entire assembly, and they listened to **Barnabas** and **Paul** describing the signs and wonders God had worked through them among the pagans.

When they had finished it was **James** who spoke. 'My brothers,' he said 'listen to me. Simeon has described how God first arranged to enlist a people for his name out of the pagans. This is entirely in harmony with the words of the prophets, since the scriptures say:

After that I shall return and rebuild the fallen House of David;

I shall rebuild it from its ruins and restore it.

Then the rest of mankind, all the pagans who are consecrated to my name, will look for the Lord, says the Lord who made this known so long ago.

'I rule, then, that instead of making things more difficult for pagans who turn to God, we send them a letter telling them merely to abstain from anything polluted by idols, from fornication, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For Moses has always had his preachers in every town, and is read aloud in the synagogues every Sabbath.'

Then the apostles and elders decided to choose delegates to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; the whole church concurred with this. They chose Judas known as Barsabbas and Silas, both leading men in the brotherhood, and gave them this letter to take with them:

'The apostles and elders, your brothers, send greetings to the brothers of pagan birth in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. We hear that some of our members have disturbed you with their demands and have unsettled your minds. They acted without any authority from us; and so we have decided unanimously to elect delegates and to send them to you with Barnabas and Paul, men we highly respect who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accordingly we are sending you Judas and Silas, who will confirm by word of mouth what we have written in this letter. It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to saddle you with any burden beyond these essentials: you are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols; from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from fornication. Avoid these, and you will do what is right. Farewell.'

The party left and went down to Antioch, where they summoned the whole community and delivered the letter. The community read it and were delighted with the encouragement it gave them.

Judas and Silas, being themselves prophets, spoke for a long time, encouraging and strengthening the brothers. These two spent some time there, and then the brothers wished them peace and they went back to those who had sent them. Paul and Barnabas, however, stayed on in Antioch, and there with many others they taught and proclaimed the Good News, the word of the Lord

THE WORD OF THE LORD

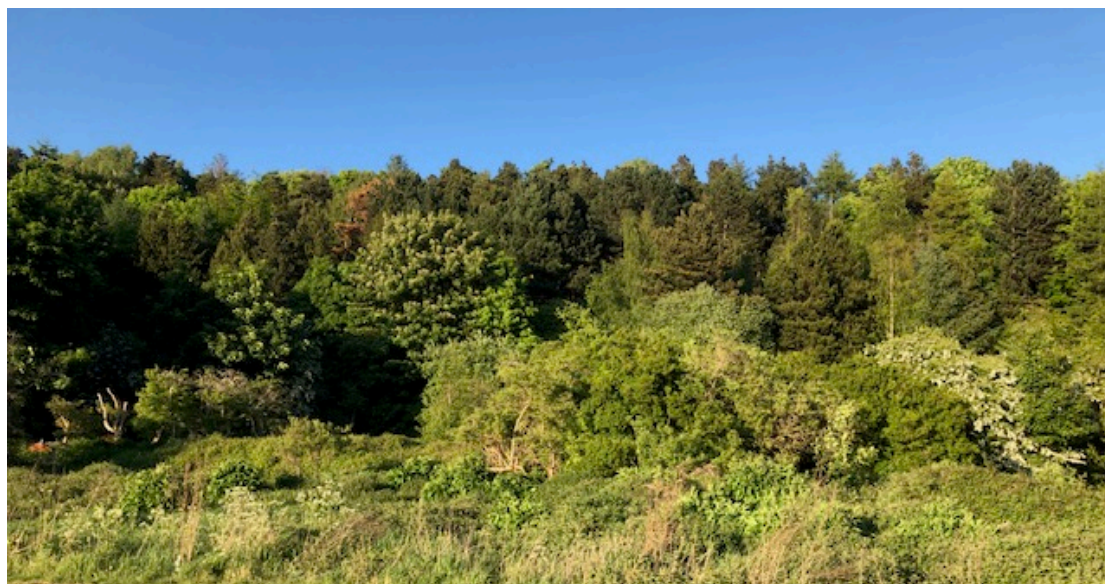
PSALM 56 (57)



My heart is ready, O God,
My heart is ready.
I will sing, I will sing your praise.
Awake, my soul,
Awake, lyre and harp,
I will awake the dawn.

I will thank you, Lord, among the peoples,
Among the nations I will praise you
For your love reaches to the heavens
and your truth to the skies.
O God, arise above the heavens;
may your glory shine on earth!

(Bank of River Calder near Dewsbury)



Alleluia, alleluia!
I call you friends, says the Lord,
because I have made known to you
everything I have learnt from my Father.
Alleluia!

A Reading From the Holy Gospel According to John 15: 12-17

Jesus said to his Disciples,
‘This is my commandment:
love one another, as I have loved you.

A man can have no greater love
than to lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends, if you do what I command you.

I shall not call you servants any more,
because a servant does not know his master’s business;

I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything
I have learnt from my Father.

You did not choose me: no, I chose you;
and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit,
fruit that will last;
and then the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name.
What I command you is to love one another.’

THE GOSPEL OF THE LORD

Reflection: As any organisation expands tensions will arise as to who can join & what the basic level of faith must be. Recorded in the Acts of the Apostles is a taste of the debate going on amongst the first Christians. The first followers of Jesus were Jews. Their faith was the foundation stone of their lives & affected every part of their day to day. As the Word of God is heard by people of other faiths & lifestyles, some sort of creed will have to be agreed upon so that, quite literally, everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet. Through prayer & discussion agreements arise & a leadership emerges centred around Peter. Paul continues to travel as the fearless preacher.

The Gospel reminds us of another aspect of our faith – that we are chosen. We do not believe in a distant deity. We worship a loving God who is interested in our very selves, & chooses us so that each of us can understand God personally. As we get to know more & more about how both the massive & the tiny things of nature all work together, it makes more & more sense to me that the Lord of All Life is constantly in touch with every aspect of Creation. That my God can know me through & through.