

# Christ Church Freemantle

## Sunday 24th May; Sunday after Ascension Day

Readings: I Peter, 4. 12-14 & 5. 6-11; Acts 1, 6-14; John 17, 1-11

Saint Peter probably wrote the letter which we now know as I Peter from Rome in about 63 AD. It was addressed to some newly established Christian communities in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) who felt isolated and vulnerable, and were at risk of being led astray. Peter was anxious to give encouragement and practical advice. This letter resonates with relevance to us today.

“Be on the alert!” says Peter (I Peter 5, v8 in the translation of the New English Bible.) Saint Peter calls on us to stand up to the devil, who prowls around looking for people to devour, and to remember that all Christians are going through similar sufferings. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century devil takes many forms. The coronavirus menaces us all, as do the loneliness and fear which it brings in train. Just as in the time of Saint Peter, our faith, and the knowledge that the Holy Spirit is always with us, are the surest defences against isolation and fear.

How well Saint Peter knew this! Some thirty years previously, he was one of the small group who, gathered together in the Palestinian countryside a few miles east of Jerusalem, witnessed the ascension of Jesus into heaven, as described by Saint Luke at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles. In his parting words, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would come upon them, and that they should bear witness to the ends of the earth. So Peter and his companions were guided for the rest of their lives as missionaries and teachers.

To be guided by the Holy Spirit, each in our own different way, remains our mission as Christians today. However unsettling the changes in this world are, the presence of the Holy Spirit amongst us is constant. This is the central message of today’s Gospel reading, from John 17. Although the day was coming when Jesus would no longer be in the world, and his disciples would no longer see him, he would not be leaving them in spirit, because God would be with them always. So now, in these days of isolation, we are not alone, because the Holy Spirit is with us. In the words of an ancient hymn:

*Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire, and lighten with celestial fire  
Thou the anointing spirit art, who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.*



*Steve Evemy*