

**Sunday 15 May 2022,
Fifth Sunday of Easter**

Collect:

Risen Christ,
your wounds declare your love for the world
and the wonder of your risen life:
give us compassion and courage
to risk ourselves for those we serve,
to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Readings for this week:

Genesis 22:1-18; Psalm 148; Acts 11:1-18, John 13:31-35

Easter tide is a seasonal of overwhelming joyfulness bubbling up under the stone barring the door of the tomb, rolling it far away. However, despite Abraham having given his first-born son a name, Isaac, that means 'laughter', there is nothing mirthful about our Genesis reading. It is a deeply unsettling moment. God's command to Abraham to offer his son in sacrifice seems to be violently perverse. But it shows us an Abraham who has taken to heart two vital lessons – that God comes first, before anything else, and that however great we believe our love for family and friends to be, God loves them, and us, more. For Abraham, trusting God is paramount, even when he can't fathom God's reasoning.

Peter is learning the same lesson. His dream of the forbidden feast is God's prompt to him to follow a deeper path of faith, one that goes beyond the boundaries that have become part of Peter's mindset, national and religious identity. Peter has a choice – trust God, trust that God is with him, or stick to the safety net of the Law. Peter chooses, traditional rules are blown open and Cornelius is saved. Abraham chooses, against all his fatherly instincts, and Isaac is saved. But, more than that, through Abraham and Peter's willingness to trust, sacrifice and be changed, God's salvation bubbles up throughout creation.

That willingness to trust, sacrifice and be changed is summed up by Jesus in our Gospel reading: 'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you,'. We know that the love Jesus showed us manifested itself on the cross, and we are also painfully aware of our own inability to make such total commitment. But Jesus also understands this – he is, after all, speaking to his messed up, fallible disciples. He is reminding them that his love for and trust in them is total.

This is the lesson Abraham and Peter have learnt. Knowing it kickstarts our own fulfilment of this commandment. God is love, God's love flows through us, God trusted us, before we were ever loved or trustworthy. When we believe this, and act upon it, we become part of God's Easter joy brimming throughout the universe.

Eternal God,
whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life:
grant us to walk in his way,
to rejoice in his truth,
and to share his risen life;
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. Amen.

Readings for next week:

Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 67; Acts 16:9-15, John 14:23-29
Sixth Sunday of Easter