

Weekly Message from Fr William for the Sixth Sunday of Easter 2023

Dear People of St Mary's

Held on this Sixth Sunday of Easter each year is the international Day of Prayer for Eastern Christians. Who are we talking about? We're talking about Christians in the Middle East like in Syria, and Iraq, and Christians in the Horn of Africa like in Eritrea and Ethiopia. They provide a direct link to the Apostolic Church since it was in these lands that Christianity first flourished. Nowadays many of these Christians are oppressed and persecuted and struggle to survive. In fact their very presence in these lands is under threat.

The Roman Catholic Church, to which many of us in St Mary's belong, is just one of many catholic churches around the world, mostly in the Middle East and in the Horn of Africa. They are all in full communion with the Pope, with the Roman Catholic Church and with each other. Here are some of them:

- The Coptic Catholic Church, mostly in Egypt.
- The Syriac Catholic Church, mostly in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Palestine.
- The Melkite Catholic Church, mostly in Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria.
- The Chaldean Catholic Church, mostly in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Israel.
- The Armenian Catholic Church, mostly in Armenia, Georgia, Iran, Jordan.
- The Ethiopian Catholic Church, in Ethiopia.
- The Eritrean Catholic Church, in Eritrea.

During these Sundays of Easter we've been hearing in the Acts of the Apostles how the early Christian community grew in faith and number. On this Sixth Sunday of Easter we hear how the Christian faith then jumped from the tightly knit people of Israel to the neighbouring people of Samaria. Very soon the faith was growing and flourishing in the lands that we now know as Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Ethiopia, Eritrea etc. It's why this Sixth Sunday of Easter has been designated the international Day of Prayer for Eastern Christians.

This day gives us the opportunity to celebrate our unity and our solidarity with these Eastern Christians, and also to pray for them. One of our bidding prayers this Sunday will be: We pray for peace in the world, especially in the Middle East and in the Horn of Africa. May the Christians in these lands be strengthened in their faith that they may continue steadfastly to give witness to Jesus Christ.

You may also choose to give financial support for projects in education, healthcare, and pastoral support, which enable Eastern Christians to remain in their homelands. There are details for giving on the bulletin for this Sunday.

*William*

Sixth Sunday of Easter, 14 May 2023