

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June

## Platinum Jubilee Celebration Songs of Praise

Joshua 1:1-9

Acts 2:1-21

John 14:8-17,25-27

Moses the great leader of Israel had died

The people who Moses had guided and inspired through the years of wilderness wanderings stood on the verge of the promised land.

Joshua was the heir apparent.

No doubt he was grieving for Moses - after all he probably knew Moses, his mentor, better than anyone. And I am sure also that he was apprehensive about the task that lay before him. To lead this people on the next stage of their journey. To inhabit this land promised to them by God.

And our first reading contains some wonderful words of encouragement for Joshua from God.

*As I was with Moses, so I am with you. I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous. The Lord you God is with you wherever you go.*

And if we read in through the book of Joshua we can see the evidence of God's presence with him. The nation of Israel entered the promised land and Joshua emerged as a wise and respected leader. God certainly was with him wherever he went.

In the reading from Acts – the traditional reading for today which as well as being the Jubilee is also Pentecost Sunday – we have Peter and the others in the upper room.

Jesus had died and had risen from the dead. He had appeared to them over a number of weeks. He had now ascended into heaven. Leaving them with a promise that the Spirit would come.

My guess is that they were still grieving for what might have been. The last few weeks had been a whirl of emotions. There were promises – but could they be relied on? They were probably also scared. Would what happened to Jesus happen to them? Would they be rounded up and arrested?

Our reading talks of the coming of the Spirit – just as Jesus had promised. The Spirit that would be as if Jesus himself were with them through each and every day. Encouraging them and strengthening them.

And again, if we read on through the book of Acts we can see the evidence of the Spirit being with them. For Peter and for the others. They had a new power within them from the Holy Spirit. The power of God at work in each of them.

Now cast your mind back if you are able to February 1952.

King George VI had died. His daughter Elizabeth was next in line for the throne. We can imagine what was going through her mind.

Grieving for her father, at the same time as anticipating this role she was about to take on as Head of State. Apprehensive, fearful even.

She knew she could only fulfil the tasks before her with the help and power of God.

She asked the nation in her first Christmas broadcast as queen, prior to the coronation

*Pray that God may give me wisdom and strength to carry out the solemn promises I shall be making, and that I may faithfully serve him all the days of my life.*

She placed her trust in the same God that spoke those words of encouragement to Joshua. Since then She has been inspired by the same God who empowered those first disciples with his Holy Spirit. Like countless millions across the ages she has placed her life into the hands of God – following the example of Jesus and being strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Living a life of love and service, following in the footsteps of Jesus. Never afraid to acknowledge the power of God in her life.

We may not have to face up the challenges Joshua faced. We will probably never find ourselves in the situation Peter and those first disciples were in. And we can be certain we will never face the future that the Queen faced back in 1952.

And yet the same God promises that same Holy Spirit to us.

For Joshua this was manifested in his confident and faithful rule, and his leading the occupation of the promised land.

For those first disciples this was manifested in the powerful preaching and witnessing to the life and death and resurrection of Jesus that enabled the nascent Christian Church to spread and to flourish. A Spirit of power.

For the Queen this has been manifested in her faithful and loving service to the people of this nation over 70 years.

For us the Holy Spirit may give us confidence and wisdom as for Joshua; the Holy Spirit might be a powerful presence as for those first disciples; or the Holy Spirit might enable us

– like the Queen – to live lives that bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.

Whatever it may be, I hope the Spirit in us enables us to say, like the Queen herself has said:

*I know how much I rely on my own faith to guide me through the good times and the bad.  
Each day is a new beginning, I know the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right,  
to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings and to put my trust in God.  
I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel.*