

## PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – YEAR C

### Psalm 66 (67)

This portion of psalmody chosen as this week's psalm of praise and thanksgiving is very short; just seven verses. The two-line response *'Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you'* is repeated every two verses in the original version.

The first verse is an adaptation of the blessing given to Moses for Aaron the priest and the people of Israel: *'May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord let his face shine on you and be gracious to you'* (Numbers 6: 24–25). However, the difference here is that the blessing is extended to all nations.

Biblical scholars differ in their interpretation of this psalm. Most think that it was written in thanksgiving for a good harvest, perhaps on the occasion of the feast of Tabernacles. Indeed verse 6, which is omitted from today's psalm, reads: *'The earth has yielded its fruit, for God, our God, has blessed us'*. However, others believe that it is a prayer asking for a good harvest still to come.

Christians see in Jesus the incarnate face of God *'shedding its light on us'*. As the Good Shepherd, Christ *'guides the nations of the earth'*.



## Gospel John 14: 23–29

### **'I have told you this now so that when it happens you will believe'**

This week we move further into Jesus's farewell discourse, which is only to be found in John's Gospel. Today's reading begins with Jesus's reply to Judas (not Judas Iscariot). Having heard Jesus say, *'In a short time the world will no longer see me; but you will see me, because I live and you will live'* (v.,19), Judas had asked Jesus, *'Lord what is this all about? Do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?'* (v.22). Prior to Judas's question, Thomas and Philip have also expressed their difficulty in understanding Jesus's meaning.

### **'If anyone loves me he will keep my word and my Father will love him'**

Judas and the others do not understand that Jesus is speaking of his resurrection; instead they are expecting him to make a much more 'worldly' return. Jesus does not answer Judas's question directly, but re-states that love and obedience are central to the promises he is making to them. (Love is an all-important theme in John's Gospel).

### **'And we shall come to him and make our home with him'**

Jesus has spoken to his disciples of the intimate relationship he has with his Father. He re-affirms this now, using 'we' in his promise of love and indwelling for those who love him; their love and obedience will also intimately unite them with himself and his Father.

### **'The Advocate, the Holy Spirit ... will teach you everything'**

Jesus's 'coming' to those who love him is directly linked with the Holy Spirit, the 'Paraclete'. This word can be interpreted as something similar to a defence lawyer, or someone 'I call to my side', as would be the case with an advocate. It is also understood as 'Comforter'. The Holy Spirit, by 'teaching and reminding' (v. 26), will lead Jesus's followers into a deeper understanding of all that he taught them while on earth.

### **'Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you.'**

Peace is Jesus's parting gift to his disciples. In the Hebrew Bible, the word for peace is *'shalom'*. It means more than just a quiet time or freedom from troubles, but rather a deeper inner peace which remains despite external unrest. No situation can either give or take away the peace of Christ.

It is thought that chapter 14 would have lead directly into the account of Jesus's Passion and death (chapters 17–19). However, John repeats material from chapter 14 in chapters 15–16. This has led many students of John's gospel to think that these two chapters are an addition to, or an alternative version of, chapter 14, most probably included to reinforce the information already given.