

June 1/2: Seventh Sunday of Easter: Reflection Weekend: Prayer

Readings: Acts 7: 55-60; Psalm 97; Revelation 22: 12-14, 16-17, 20; John 17: 20-26.

Summary: Stephen, the first martyr of the infant Church, washes his robe in the blood of the Lamb, the Alpha and Omega. He proclaims Jesus Lord and King, Most High over all the earth. In Him may all become one.

Liturgical Orientation:

Today's gospel presents a portion of the priestly prayer of Jesus. As the Lord Jesus stands with hands outstretched between heaven and earth on our behalf, so too, this Sunday stands between the Ascension and Pentecost to remind us of our location: the "already" of the announcement of the reign of God, and the "not yet" of the kingdom's fulfillment. Jesus' prayer makes it clear that it is here in this world that his followers are to do the work of **evangelization**. We are here to build His kingdom!

I. Acts 7: 55-60: *I see the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.*

Stephen's angelic countenance is interpreted in terms of a heavenly vision. Coming right after Stephen's speech, the vision ratifies what was spoken: the indictment of the listeners and the location of God's "glory" in heaven with the risen Christ, rather than in the Temple made by human hands.

Psalm 97: *The Lord is king, the most high over all the earth.*

II. Rev. 22: 12-14, 16-17, 20: *Come, Lord Jesus!*

John has little hope for the repentance of the wicked. Although believers are saved by the blood of the lamb, it is especially those who have died for their faith who are declared blessed. The Lord continues to invite. The bride is not simply a metaphor for the Christian community. Like the Spirit, she is an aspect of the divine which calls humanity to salvation.

Gospel: John 17: 20-26: *That they may be brought to perfection as one!*

In Jesus' prayer for his disciples is a prayer for the unity among all those who will follow him. Jesus asks that the Father keep and sanctify the disciples, who will not assume the place "in the world" that he has held. A new relationship is established: to the Father, to Jesus, and to disciples in every age. And the prayer is extended to those who will come to believe because of the witness of the followers of Jesus.

Stewardship Orientation:

This is the first part of our Stewardship Renewal where parishioners are reminded that now is the time when we will all once again begin to think about the many gifts that God has given us, especially our gift of time and the way we use that gift through prayers. Reflection Weekend is designed to remind us that our annual stewardship renewal is upon us, and that this is what we, as individuals connected to this parish community, will be doing during the next couple of weeks.

Breaking Open the Word:

- ❖ We are coming to the conclusion of the Easter Season, awaiting the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. We are also preparing to recommit ourselves to the **2nd Pillar of Stewardship – Prayer**.
- ❖ The **Stewardship of Prayer** is a concrete manifestation of our witness to Jesus. Stephen witnessed to Jesus in his words, actions, and in the very act of giving up his life. We, too are invited to reflect on how we - in prayer - can become Christ's hands and heart to all those around us.
- ❖ Are our actions supported by an **active prayer life**, or do they **reflect** our own inactivity? If not me, who? If not now, when?

