

# Sunday Homily

## SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

16 MAY 2021

YEAR B

“I am not asking you to take them out of the world,  
but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.”

John 17:15

### Illustration

There is an old Indian story which tells the tale of a woman who was so concerned that her children would be influenced for evil by the outside world that she built a huge wall around her home. Her infant children were used to their restricted world but as they grew older they became curious about life beyond the boundaries of their garden. One day, while their mother's attention was distracted, two of the children climbed over the wall. As they landed on the other side they were met by an ocean of faces of local people who laughed at their nervous expressions. The villagers had also been curious to know what existed on the other side of the great wall. The two children became very frightened and frantically searched for a way back to their home. They could not cope with the world outside the wall.

There is a very human temptation to build walls around ourselves for protection; to build boundaries around our families or communities in an effort both to guard those within and to keep others out. The worst kinds of boundaries are those around our minds: those which cling to the outmoded concepts, which limit the expansion of thought and the creative imagination which God gave us in order to do his work more effectively. Like those children escaping from their comfortably safe garden, a sudden burst of new ideas can disorientate and frighten us. But if we grow up absorbing the knowledge of Christ's confidence in us and our sanctity for which he prayed, we will have learned how to handle development and change, which is all the protection we need. We shall not need walls.

### Gospel Teaching

Jesus did not ask his disciples to build a big wall around themselves. He was well aware of the dangers and evils of the world. He had been subjected to enough of them during his own life and ministry.

One of his concerns for them was that they should be protected from the “evil one”. He does not want his followers to be removed from the world, but protected within it. The evil one takes many forms in a world like ours, perhaps even more in number and subtlety than in first-century Palestine. In this great discourse of Jesus at the Last Supper he prays with all his might, not just for those around

this Passover table, but for the whole Church, then and to come. He wants his followers to remain faithful to his teaching, as he knows that this is the way in which God's world can be renewed and made more perfect. Not an easy task in a world where many reject his message.

His disciples who accept and hand on his teaching will also receive harsh treatment. Christianity is not a cosy club. But Jesus has confidence in them and us and in our ability to keep his message alive, despite the hardships and dangers. Jesus believes in us and we can feel supported by his prayers for our protection and encouragement.

## Application

For many of us self-doubt and lack of confidence in ourselves as Christians keep us from realising the degree of faith which God has in us. Each Christian has been given the skills and faith necessary to carry on the truths and traditions through their lives, among those with whom they come into contact. But there are dangers and we do need protection not only from our own weaknesses but against the "dark forces": those aspects of life which are not of God, which can divert or tempt us away from God's grace.

Jesus had no doubt of the quality of those he called to follow him, then and now. We are gifted just as they were. Of course we have our doubts, we struggle with questions of faith. But this is part of our gift to God, that we persist in spite of difficulty. Walls which restrict our movement or thought cannot protect us, but God can and he hears the prayers of his Son on our behalf. If Jesus has confidence in us, as individuals and as part of the Church, then we should have confidence in ourselves and each other. We are a force for tremendous good in the world. In our families and communities, in great acts of generosity and in simple acts of kindness we make the presence of God manifest. Under the protection of Christ we become confident disciples, sanctified and consecrated in the truth and ready to spread his word by our living out the example of his love.