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Weekly Letter – 17 May 2026 – the last Sunday of Easter

John 17.1-11

This short passage in John's gospel is full of poignant reflections of how Jesus steadfastly surrenders himself to the path the Father has chosen for him – Death.

What gems can we see in Christ's choice of self-giving to God's future?

Firstly, we can notice that Christ does not live with any worries about the past or the future. Rather, he calmly and with absolute honesty knows that he has done God's work, and this experience gives him freedom and divine hope for the future. How can you live today without any worries about the past and the future?

Secondly, just as Jesus embraces the future, we too need to find an honest way of acknowledging our mortality, with no attempt of sugar coating the truth for we all face suffering and death. Speaking with other Christians about these two inevitable aspects of life will surely help?

Thirdly, Jesus shows us that we need to repeatedly ask God our Father to help us to trust the future, and that in part means you know in your heart that you are loved by God. For this truth, that you are loved will give you freedom and joy. The lay Dominican Pier Giorgio Frassati put it like this, "To live with true awareness means preparing for death not as defeat but as the culmination of life that has found meaning in love and self-giving". He continues by showing that when the saints discover this framework in which to live within, they increasingly see life as an opportunity to offer oneself for the good of others. And for many this way of living grants you the divine force of hope, which gives you the courage to love and for some, the gift of embracing all that life is. These gifts and choices, are truly sensational for they enable you and I to give thanks for all that has been, and to the future, the good fortune to be able to say "Yes".

I could have put the above more simply! "Trust the past to the mercy of God; the present to his love; and the future to his providence". St Augustine of Hippo.

Prayer: Your will is my heritage forever
the joy of my heart.
I set myself to carry out your will
In fullness for ever. Psalm 11.111-112.

Amen.

Stephen

Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom at 10.30 am will be led by Mrs Judy Harris

Bible Readings: Psalm 68.32-35: Acts 1.6-11.

Cycle of Prayer in the Region – we will pray for Temple, Gowerton

Tuesday, 17th May – 2-4pm –Tea and Chat - Who is this?

Please bring a baby picture of yourself so that we can put them around the room while Tea & Chat is on for people to work out who is who.

You might have heard about **A Million Acts of Hope** – a social media campaign (and more!) designed to drown out the marches and other activities creating division in our society. It presents instead a positive alternative that showcases the amazing and constant work of churches, community groups, uniformed organisations and everyone else who works to create community and demonstrate the kind, compassionate and hopeful country we live in. There are different ways to be involved.

The simplest is to Sign Britain's Biggest Thankyou Card - anyone can sign online at <https://millionactsofhope.org>. Please do this if you can.

Another is to Share a photo on social media of an activity you're involved in which shows people in communities coming together and enjoying themselves and then to adding it to the Act of Hope Register.

Consequently, I took a photograph of everyone who was at Tea & Chat on 5th May and I have registered it with the Act of Hope Register." Thank you to everyone at Tea and Chat agreeing to this. Adella.

FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

(Lectionary readings: Acts 1.6-14: Psalm 68.1-10: 1 Peter 4.12-14: 5.6-11: John 17.1-11)

Christ of the cross, of the body,
of nails and scars and shame,
we pray for sisters and brothers
who suffer because they love you.

Where the church is tested, insulted,
anxious or threatened,
we pray for steadiness and resilience,
for sure confidence in God,
and for joy that is fuller and deeper than fear.

Where laws, governments and courts
are tilted against the gospel.
Where faith is resented
and worship must be cautious.
Where people go to prison or death
because they speak and act for Jesus...
We ask for strength of purpose and spirit.

And if there is anything we can do
by gift, deed or voice,
to support, to care and to help,
we ask for wisdom to discern it
and commitment to do it.

John Proctor (URC Prayer Handbook 2026)