

## DEVOTIONAL SACRED SEASON

DAY 5 and 25 - 9th and 29th June

### THE LIBERATING GIFT PROFESSOR BRIAN HILL

Professor Brian Hill is an Emeritus professor of education at Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia and has been an active member and leader in the Uniting Church for many years.

### OPENING PRAYER

BIBLE READINGS: Acts 20:28 CEV

Leader

Look after yourselves and everyone the Holy Spirit has placed in your care. Be like shepherds to God's church. It is the flock that he bought with the blood of his own Son."

### PRAYERS OF PRAISE AND ADORATION

### PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

BIBLE READINGS: John 14:23-27

Reader 1

23 Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24 Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

Reader 2

25 "All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

### PARAGRAPH 3c: BASIS OF UNION

Reader 1

The Church as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit confesses Jesus as Lord over its own life; it also confesses that Jesus is Head over all things, the beginning of a new creation, of a new humanity. God in Christ has given to all people in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation.

Reader 2

The Church's call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself.

Reader 3

The Church lives between the time of Christ's death and resurrection and the final consummation of all things which Christ will bring; the Church is a pilgrim people, always on the way towards a promised goal; here the Church does not have a continuing city but seeks one to come. On the way Christ feeds the Church with Word and Sacraments, and it has the gift of the Spirit in order that it may not lose the way.

### REFLECTION

Reader 1

What is a human being's natural habitat? Much emphasis is placed these days on the material plane, on which we exist as bodies. But human beings also operate on a spiritual plane. We are conscious selves with powers of thought and choice which go well beyond the biological level of functioning.

Reader 2:

At a spiritual level, sadly, our awareness has been darkened by sin, and we need help to function in a coordinated way on both levels – as embodied spirits under God's rule. For this we need the transformation, which is promised to those who turn to Christ. How does that happen?

Reader 3

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The key is that Jesus gifts his Holy Spirit to new believers. His Spirit changes the spiritual atmosphere we breathe. We're not transformed overnight, but our spiritual rehabilitation has begun. All this is in preparation for the day when, having got the body-spirit balance right, we become citizens of the New Creation, which Christ will establish.

Reader 1:

Don't just take my word for it. Read Jesus's agenda, reflected in the briefing he gave his disciples in John 14:

Reader 2

23 . . . If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. 25 All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you . . . 33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Reader 3

As the Basis of Union, in obedience to Scripture, affirms: "the Holy Spirit is given as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation . . . The Church lives between the time of Christ's death and resurrection and the final consummation of all things which Christ will bring".

PRAYER

Leader:

Thank you, O Lord my God, that I don't have to make the grade on my own, but have the pledge of Your presence, breath for my soul, as I live and witness en route to my true home in the New Creation. Amen.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

CONFESSION FROM BASIS OF UNION

Leader:

Within this fellowship of the Uniting Church in Australia, and as part of the Christian church around the world, let us confess Christ in the following words from the Basis of Union.

Reader 1:

Today we 'confess Jesus as Lord over (our) own life' and 'Head over all things, the beginning of a new creation, of a new humanity'.

Leader:

We joyously proclaim that 'in Jesus Christ "God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19 RSV)',

Reader 4:

and that 'in love for the world, God gave the Son to take away the world's sin.'

Leader:

With the gracious help of God our congregations are committed to serve the world for which Christ died, and...await with hope the day of the Lord Jesus Christ

Reader 4:

on which it will be clear that the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of the Christ, who shall reign for ever and ever.' Amen.

Nb. The words in quotation marks are direct quotes from the Basis of Union  
Prepared by Rev Rod James.

FINAL PRAYER