

PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – YEAR C

Psalm 144 (145)

Some scholars think that this psalm was once the last in the book, with five other psalms to the glory of God added later on.

Its structure is unusual. The first word of each verse begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, from the first to the last. This device was used to help memorise the text for private or public recitation. It also expresses total fullness, rather like an 'A to Z' of praise. Texts like these, called acrostics, were the work of highly skilled artists.

In the verses we pray this week, the psalmist alternates between talking (possibly to the congregation) about God (as in the first stanza), and addressing God in person.



The psalmist praises a God whose attributes he is keen to summarise and extol. In this he echoes the self- description which the Lord gave to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34: 6): *'a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in kindness and faithfulness'*.

He addresses a God whom he acknowledges as king (*the glory of your reign, an everlasting kingdom*) and continues with words of praise (*thank, bless, speak, declare and make known*) for his mighty deeds.

The response, part of an earlier verse, blesses God's name. Names were important in Ancient Times, reflecting the nature and character of a person – their very essence. Even in the New Testament, name changes occur at important moments in people's lives (as, for example, Saul to Paul, Simon to Peter).



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH
IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

Gospel John 13: 31–35

'Love one another as I have loved you'

Chapter 13: 31 to Chapter 17 in John's Gospel are known as 'The Farewell Discourse', where Jesus speaks to his disciples before his death and resurrection. This Sunday's passage comes after Judas leaves the group to betray Jesus, and just before Jesus foretells Peter's denials.

'Now has the Son of Man been glorified ...'

This is a complex sentence using both the past and the future tense. It has challenged many scholars. The 'glorification process' for Jesus – that is, being publicly honoured and acclaimed, revealing the very essence of a person – involves rejection, crucifixion, death and resurrection.

'Now' refers to Judas's departure to betray Jesus: the scene is set, wheels are in motion, the rest will follow. This is how being glorified can be both in the past (betrayal) and in the future (death and resurrection).

'My little children'

Although it is the only time Jesus calls his disciples 'children' in John's Gospel, the evangelist uses this term several times in his letters.

A new commandment

The injunction to love one another is not, in itself, new. It can be found in the Old Testament: 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Leviticus 19: 18). But what is new here is the command to the disciples to *'love one another just as I have loved you.'* Jesus is the model, the reason, the cause for loving one another.

It should be noted that the term 'love', as well as meaning simply 'liking' someone, also implies – at the very least – attachment, commitment, and loyalty. It also means showing compassion and helping those in need.

'By this love everyone will know you are my disciples'

This is the main purpose of this love between the disciples. It mirrors the love of Jesus for all people. It is a sign of 'being Church'.

