

## PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

### SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – YEAR A

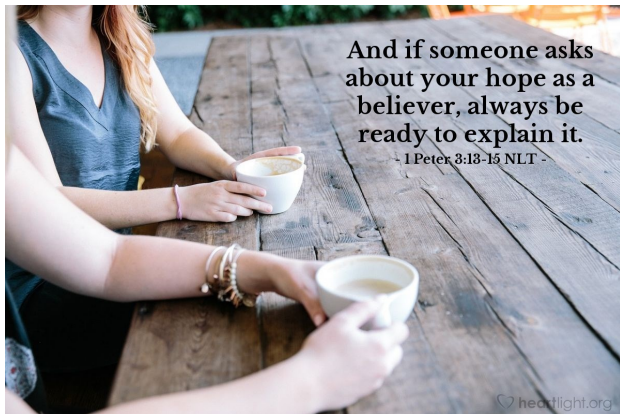
#### Second Reading 1 Peter 3: 15–18

Peter continues to give recommendations to the early Christians facing persecution. If, despite living as decent, honourable citizens, they are challenged, they must then be ready to explain why they lead Christ-centred lives. (*'Have your answer ready ... for the hope you all have.'*) The author advises a dual approach to these attacks: have an answer ready for the criticisms, and answer the person gently and politely. This way, they can live with a clear conscience.

Their hope – that is their faith – is not just a vague conviction but the essence of what motivates them. Their persecutors may then realise that they were wrong in their accusations and stop harassing them.

In the end, if they have to encounter criticism, it is far better to suffer for the good they do. This is how we can walk in the footsteps of Christ, who suffered for sinners. God did not abandon him, but 'raised him to life'. He died but now lives with us, so he can lead us to God. We can see a parallel between the Passion of Christ – who, like them, had not done anything wrong – and their own sufferings.

Theologians suggest that the last paragraph in this week's text (v. 18) may be a fragment from an early Christ-centred hymn.



## Gospel John 14: 15–21

### The Farewell Discourses

These verses follow on from last Sunday's Gospel as a continuation of the Farewell Discourses. Jesus speaks to his disciples of love and in-dwelling, stressing the union between himself, the Father, and themselves.

### Another 'advocate' (*Paraklētos*)

The Greek term *paraklētos* is difficult to translate accurately in English. It has taken on a number of meanings over time. The word has its origins in legal language and is understood to mean someone who is 'called in'; perhaps 'called' to give witness in defence of someone in court, or as an advocate to plead for someone in times of trouble. It has often been interpreted as 'Comforter', 'Helper' or 'Mediator'.

### John's use of the word

No single interpretation of the word *paraklētos* encompasses the meaning intended by John. For John, the Paraclete is a teacher; a witness to Jesus; one who represents the continued presence of Jesus on earth. He is the one who will guide the disciples in the difficult times ahead. The word appears only in Chapters 14, 15 and 16, and is also used as a title for the risen Christ as intercessor for Christians in 1 John 2: 1–2.

### The spirit of truth

Truth is one of the characteristics of the Spirit, as it was for the first paraclete, Jesus.

### The world

Those who live godless lives and who cannot accept the Spirit, just as they could not accept the Son, and through him, the Father.

### I will not leave you orphans

'Orphanos' means 'without a father', but in the case of students or disciples, it means without a teacher.

### I will come back to you

This refers to Jesus's in-dwelling presence ('and you in me and I in you': v. 20), rather than to Parousia (the second coming of Christ). The promises express the way Jesus will 'return' and so remain present to those who believe. They confirm the tradition which had developed in St John's community that the 'divine presence' will only be visible to the eye of faith. The believers will experience the Father, the Son and the Spirit.