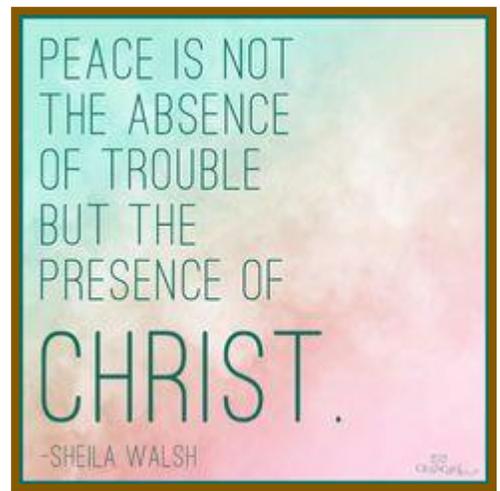


May 1, 2016

6th Sunday of Easter

John 14:23-29

Jesus said to his disciples: “Anyone who loves me will be true to my word, and my Father will love him; we will come to him and make our dwelling place with him always. 24 He who does not love me does not keep my words. Yet the word you hear is not mine; it comes from the Father who sent me.



25 This much have I told you while I was still with you; 26 the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will instruct you in everything, and remind you of all that I told you. 27 ‘Peace’ is my farewell to you, my peace is my gift to you; I do not give it to you as the world gives peace. Do not be distressed or fearful. 28 You have heard me say, ‘I go away for a while, and I come back to you.’ If you truly loved me you would rejoice to have me go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 I tell you this now, before it takes place, so that when it takes place you may believe.”

BACKGROUND

This is the 6th Sunday of Easter. For the last five weeks the scripture readings have helped us reflect on our relationship to the risen Lord. Next we will celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord, and the following week is the Feast of Pentecost. This gospel text offers a glimpse into the early Christians’ first reflection on the role of the Holy Spirit and the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. By introducing the role of the Paraclete, the text is preparing us to celebrate the great Feast of Pentecost. But the text itself is part of John’s account of the Last Supper. From the text’s placement within John’s gospel, we see it would have helped the disciples prepare for the events of the Passion. The text is relevant for John’s community, more than a generation after the actual death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, because they are also dealing with the absence of Jesus in another way.

The early believers relied on the presence of those who had personally known Jesus to help guide them in a new way of life. When the Romans destroyed the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Christians interpreted this as an expression of God’s anger and anticipated that Jesus’ triumphant return would soon follow. When Jesus did not return, and those who had experienced the living Jesus also began to die, questions and doubts arose within the community. Many did not endure.

Another aspect of life for the early believers that is different from many contemporary Christians is the access to information. The early Christians lived in a world where deception and secrecy was typical and presumed. People relied on insiders to keep them updated with accurate information they could trust.

In John’s gospel, the Paraclete (Holy Spirit) is described as having at least three roles. The Paraclete is the continuing presence of Jesus on earth after the ascension, and the source of truth. “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you, the comforter and advocate.” (John 14:17) And lastly in the text for today the Paraclete reminds the community of the things that Jesus had taught, and testifies to the truth on behalf of Jesus. (John 14:26)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Who are the “wisdom people” in your life?
2. Who are the important people in your life of faith?
3. How did the loss of any of these people affect you and your ability to persevere in the values that they represented?
4. In the first verse of this gospel Jesus says: “Anyone who loves me will be true to my word, and my Father will love him; we will come to him and make our dwelling place with him always.” How do you experience the truth of Jesus’ promise to you in these words?
5. In verse 26 of this text, Jesus reassures his followers that “the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will instruct you in everything, and remind you of all that I told you.” How would that have been reassuring to early Christians for whom John is writing his gospel? Is it reassuring to you in the same way?
6. In verse 27 Jesus talks about peace being his gift to us, but it is not the peace that world gives. How does the world give peace? How is the peace that Jesus gives different?
7. Can you point to times in your life when you have experienced great inner peace even though there may have been turbulence or hardship in your life?
8. Do you experience a kind of “knowing” in your heart and/or guts that is different from “knowing” in your head about what it means to “act on the word of God”?
9. John writes his gospel to respond to the doubt, fears, and questions of the Christians of his day. Do you experience doubt or questions in your life? Does this text offer you any reassurance that God is with you despite the struggles you may be feeling?

The reflection and questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel.

