

6th Sunday of the Easter

The Gospel of today, like that of last Sunday continues the long conversation Jesus had with his apostles during the last Supper. That conversation is as much relevant to us as it was for the apostles and for the early Christians. We are the products of the teachings of the apostles and the continuing work of the Holy Spirit. And as good and obedient disciples, Jesus knows that just like the apostles who sat at table with him on that fateful day, we also stand in much need of the encouragement he was given them that day, and for many days, weeks and years to come. We are for Jesus what his apostles were i.e. we are his greatest treasures on earth. Every word that he spoke to them, he repeats to us. He says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled" and again he says, "I will not leave you orphaned; I will come back to you."

The apostles were to train themselves, not so much as to see him physically, as to feel him deeply in them of his presence through the Holy Spirit, which he would send them, to enlighten, strengthen and defend them. In this way, Jesus assured the apostles, and we as well, of the presence of the Spirit within us. In other words, Jesus makes a difference between the way he has been present to the disciples until then, and the way he will be present to them after he leaves them. Jesus describes this process of getting to know him, and this process is that the person must follow his teaching and then gradually enters into a deep relationship with him. In that way he proves that he did not leave his disciples orphaned or desolate. By the active faith of the disciples, they were able to see him in that new way, and through their obedience to his commandments, they were drawn into a loving communion with him and with the father. We too are not left orphaned. We have the same access to Christ presence and to the help of the Holy Spirit as the first Christians had. Jesus is not present as a vague memory of a person who lived long ago, but as a real, life-giving presence that transforms us. Nowhere do we feel so close to him as when we receive him in the Eucharist. When we receive the Eucharist we are not just in communication with him, but also in communion with him, hence the name, 'Holy Communion'. The food of the Eucharist gives us the strength to do his words, his bidding and to live as disciples. The truth of the matter is that if we live by his commandments, we will have a deeper, richer, and happier life here on earth, and eternal life in the hereafter. This may sound unbelievable or unattainable. Try it. They say that the taste of the pudding is in the eating.

In his conversation with his disciples, Jesus revealed to them another truth. He assured them of his Father's love for them at all times. In baptism which Jesus offered to us individually, we have these incredible and precious treasures which are: his own spirit, his father, and his abiding presence. Therefore, with this assurance we must strive day after day to make these treasures more intensely ours, and try to keep these treasures we have received safe.

Jesus knew that the Father loved him. He responded by loving the Father. He showed his love for his Father through his obedience, even though that obedience cost him his life. So, it is also through obedience that we are to show our love for Jesus. That means that we listen to his words and put them into practice. Like the sun-flower that follows every movement of the sun we too must be amenable to where the spirit of Jesus leads us, because the direction is always towards the father. In other words, as often as we obey him by adhering to his teachings, he continues to lead us deeper and deeper into the life and communion of the Blessed Trinity. That is why he said, “whoever loves me, will obey my teaching; and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home in him.” John 14: 23.

However, it is not easy to live as disciples of Jesus in our modern world. And we know that there are those who proclaim their love of Jesus with their lips but who deny him in their deeds. Real love is shown in deeds. People know us by our acts, not by what we say with our lips. St. Peter, in the second reading encourages all Christians to worship the Lord present in their hearts through his spirit. And that they were to offer a testimony of their faith and of their hope through their good living despite all odds, because this is a good way to show solidarity with Jesus who first suffered and died for our sake. We noticed in the first reading, how open the Samaritans were to receiving the Good News. We see the spirit of Jesus working in their hearts enabling them to put away their prejudices against the Jews of Jerusalem, and accepted the message preached by Philip, and most importantly acknowledged Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Jesus continues this in every Christian community.