



Come and See!

May 13, 2018

The Word...

"In the first book, Theophilus,
I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught until the day he was taken up,
after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit
to the apostles whom he had chosen.
He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered,
appearing to them during forty days
and speaking about the kingdom of God.
While meeting with them, he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem,
but to wait for 'the promise of the Father...'"
(from Acts 1:1-11)

Pondering the Word...

Put yourself in the disciples' sandals. They are still in Jerusalem, likely locked up in the upper room where they have been hiding. The city is still a hotbed. They are still in danger. You have to imagine at least one of them has brought up the idea of getting the heck out of there and reconvening in Capernaum or somewhere else. The visits from the Risen Christ are awe-inspiring and amazing, but disconcerting nonetheless. But Jesus is emphatic: 'Stay here in Jerusalem. Sit tight until you receive the Holy Spirit. Then, all your fear and trembling will be over. You will understand my call.'

When things are difficult in our lives, when darkness falls and we are confused and frightened, we may want to escape somewhere as well. And at times, retreating to rest and renew is a good idea. But in the end, we are called to stay right where we are and await "the promise of the Father" who will guide us through the dark times. "*Stability requires that we not run away from the place our battles are being fought.*" (from *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community*)

Living the Word...

How do you react when things become overwhelming? While we might be tempted to actually run away physically, I think most of us probably stick it out onsite. But that doesn't mean we don't run away emotionally. We present a good face but are suffering on the inside, or we shut ourselves off from those we love, unable to understand or forgive them. Perhaps we are the type who goes into hiding and chooses to stay there, locked away because the idea of emerging into the light is unbearable. We often miss God's call and the opportunity to use our darkness as a place of growth.

We spend a good deal of our lives in the middle--on Holy Saturdays--between abject grief and great joy. Jesus' advice to the early disciples applies to us as well: 'Sit tight. Have faith in God's promise. Pray. Reflect, don't react rashly or ruminate or hide forever. Wait and listen for the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.'

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

May 14: *"You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this apostolic ministry from which Judas turned away to go to his own place."*(Acts 1: 15-17, 20-26)

A good follow-up to Sunday's reflection. *"Judas turned away to go to his own place."* The darkness overtook him and he went to the extreme to hide. What might have happened if he, like Peter, chose to confront his darkness, to allow the light of God's mercy to shine through? We often find the most powerful witness to the love of God in people who have turned back to the light rather than turning away. Pray today for those who dwell in darkness. Pray that God's love will reach them and bring them back to their place in the Kingdom.

May 15: *"And so I declare to you I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, for I did not shrink from proclaiming to you the entire plan of God."* (Acts 20:17-27)

Paul's words sound harsh, but there's a lesson in them for all of us. There comes a point in our relationships when we have to let go and allow the other to take what we have given and move on. Many of us feel an unhealthy responsibility for the outcome of things beyond our control. Often, a desire for control causes us to hold on long after we have done all we can or should. *"One element every good relationship requires...is the self-restraint that acknowledges and respects the potential in others to put order to their lives."* (Kennedy & Charles, 2001, adapted) What or who are you holding onto? Step back and assess your motivation. There may be good reasons, but see if there are things you can begin to let go.

May 16: *"I commend you to God and to that gracious word of his that can build you up."* (Acts 20: 28-38)

Another good follow-up...if you're struggling to let go of something—another person, a situation, sinfulness, whatever it is you hold onto—commend it to God. God will take on those things you entrust to his will. God's gracious word, found in Scripture, and God's Word—Jesus—will build you up and keep you strong.

May 17: *"I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one..."*(Jn 17:20-26)

There's a topic in many of the readings this week, and throughout the Easter season: the importance of being one, the importance of unity in Christ. We hear Paul in Ephesians emphasize that the people be of *'one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism;'* Jesus, throughout the Last Supper Discourses in John's Gospel, stresses the need for unity and oneness. History has shown that this admonition falls on deaf ears, that every opportunity we have, we drive wedges between us because of this dogma or that doctrine. I do wonder how God will judge us who have dissected and divided the Body of Christ.

May 18: *He said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?... "Feed my lambs." "Simon, son of John, do you love me? ...Tend my sheep." Simon, son of John, do you love me?... "Feed my sheep."*(Jn 21:15-19)

There's an interesting nuance in this passage, one I find so endearing and empowering. We know Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter, "the rock, the foundation," a nickname, as Anthony DeMello says, for Simon Peter to live up to. Here, he addresses Peter by his given name, "Simon, son of Jonas." After all the headiness and power of the past three years, with all the drama that has unfolded...*"Simon, do you love me?"* Jesus addresses Simon Peter at his core, at his very heart, as if to say, 'Yes, I gave you a new name, but this grace has been in you all along;' as if to say, "I will soon be leaving you, but you've got this. I've shone a light on your gifts and your shortcomings. Now it's up to you.' Jesus always empowers us with our faith. Do you hear him calling you by your real name? What is he calling you to do for his flock?

May 19: *"The LORD searches the just and the wicked; the lover of violence he hates."* (Ps 11)

If God is love (1 Jn 4:8), then how can God hate? This is one of those questions that can trip us up. We can always fall back on "Hebrew hyperbole," the tendency in the Hebrew texts to overemphasize things to get the point across (e.g., pluck out your eye, cut off your hand--Mt 18:8-9). Or, as is often the case, we can use it to condemn others. But I wonder...if God is love, then violence and injustice cannot exist within God's realm. Those who perpetrate violence and injustice are cut off, by their own choice, from God's love. It is they that hate love, not love that hates them. How will you foster God's realm of love today?