



Come and See!

Pentecost, Week of May 19, 2024

The Word...

“When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father,
the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father,
he will testify to me. And you also testify,
because you have been with me from the beginning.
I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now.
But when he comes, the Spirit of truth,
he will guide you to all truth”
(from Jn 15:26-27; 16:12-15).

(Note: Now that we reenter Ordinary Time, we return to the “Come and See “ format until Advent.)

Pondering the Word ... *“I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now.”*

I’d guess most of us can remember a time when, after we had finally reached some level of maturity, thinking, “I wish I had listened to what my parents had told me!” Our wonderful mother used to say, “Before you kids were 12 or 13, I talked and I prayed and I talked and I prayed. After that, I just prayed because I knew you wouldn’t listen to what I said.”

I can only imagine that as Jesus says these words, a few of the disciples—Peter and perhaps James and John—are thinking, “Come on, Lord...I can bear it, I can handle it. Try me!” They get tried alright, and they run away. They can’t bear the truth as it came to pass. It is not until the Spirit comes that they begin to comprehend the truth of God’s love. And the Spirit continued to guide them, just as the Spirit guides us.

Living the Word...

I have been privileged over the last several years to guide people in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in Everyday Life, a nine-month prayer experience through Loyola University, Maryland. I have led some young people, but most of my retreatants are older, and I invariably hear something like this at some point in the experience: “Why has it taken me so long to learn all this about God’s love?” “If I had only known this when I was younger!” This was my own experience as well, but we rely on God’s timing.

As we talked about last week, the Spirit invites us closer to open our eyes and ears and hearts when we are most ready to realize the awesome truth of God’s mercy and love, and that may not come until later in life. But try to pay close attention this week of Pentecost to the Spirit’s promptings. If you are blessed to have a slower pace this summer, try to allot more time for prayer. Be open and reflect on how you are invited to bear the truth of God’s love in the world.

Personal Reflections and Ideas ... _____

Mon, May 20: *[The Apostles] returned to Jerusalem...and devoted themselves constantly to prayer, with a shared intensity of feeling, together with the women and with Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers (Acts 1:12-14, literal translation).* The phrase “with a shared intensity of feeling” spoke to me. I believe many of us pray with intensity and zeal, but I wonder if our intentions are “of one accord.” I imagine the disciples’ prayer as simple and powerful: Give us the grace and courage to spread the Good News of God’s love and mercy to all, before Christ returns. **Reflection/Provision:** Put yourself in the scene: you are in the upper room with the disciples after the Ascension. What are your emotions? For what are you praying? What do you think Mother Mary is thinking and praying about? Imagine you can talk to her. She listens. What does she say to you?

Tue, May 21: *“Had I but wings like a dove, I would fly away and be at rest. ...In the city I see violence and strife, day and night they prowl about upon its walls” (Ps 55).* In *The Hebrew Bible, a Translation with Commentary* (2019), OT scholar Robert Alter explains this psalm refers to both external enemies and to “scoundrels” from the inside who have taken over the city. **Reflection/Provision:** We can read this literally, and God knows, we see it today. I often think of escaping to some place of rest, away from the news of violence and strife. But we can also read this as a metaphor for those internal “scoundrels” that wreak havoc in our lives: things like bitterness, jadedness, and harsh judgment that show a lack of faith in God’s unending providence. Take a rest from the newsfeed and instead allow your heart to be filled with faith that, in God, all will be well.

Wed, May 22: *“You are a puff of smoke that appears briefly and then disappears. Instead, you should say, “If the Lord wills it, we shall live to do this or that” (Jas 4:13-17).* **Reflection/Provision:** Two weeks ago, a dear God-friend passed away suddenly. It left our community breathless that someone could be taken so quickly without warning. Have you experienced this kind of loss? It takes time to process and reminds us of what James tells us: our lives are brief as a “puff of smoke.” Spend time today reflecting on this, not in fear, but in hope. If the Lord wills, live and live well. Our friend, Pat, had simple advice for each day: Do something nice for yourself, learn something new, and be kind. Good words to live by. (*Rest in God’s peace, Pat Rudolph.*)

Thu, May 23: *“For his own self he blesses when alive and acclaims You for giving him bounty” (Ps 49:19, Hebrew translation).* For people like me, this psalm and the reading from James are the “squirm in your seat” lessons we’ve talked about in the past. But the Hebrew translation of the psalm reads differently than the English. The psalmist is actually criticizing and doubting the rich person’s piety in thanking God for giving him the bounty he has (Alter, 2019). This is different from what we know about the Jewish view of riches as being a sign of God’s approval. **Reflection/Provision:** Yes, I struggle with whether I am to take James’ warnings literally. I placate myself in that I do not “worship” my blessings nor myself for having them. And I take solace in Jesus’ words today about receiving my reward for sharing what I have and doing good. But these readings merit reflection for those of us so blessed. How important is “our stuff?” Do we imagine our wealth to be a sign of God’s approval? Are we like the Pharisee in Luke 18, thankful we are not like the tax collector?

Fri, May 24: *“Do not complain, brothers and sisters, about one another, that you may not be judged” (Jas 5: 9-12).* James’ letter is worth a full read. It is short and straightforward, like today’s verse. **Reflection/Provision:** Challenge yourself today. In the morning, pay attention to what you are complaining about. For most of us, our complaints tend to be about our blessings: the doctor wasn’t on time, the car needs service, the kids aren’t cooperating. In the afternoon, see if you can go without complaining about others—your spouse, your parent, your child; your employer, your employees; the guy swerving in and out of traffic, the inattentive cashier, the homeless woman on the corner, the (fill in the blank). Tonight, reflect on what you’ve learned.

Sat, May 25: *People were bringing children to Jesus that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he became indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Mk 10:13-17).* **Reflection/Provision:** I know several people who have left church because their denominations refuse to acknowledge their children’s sexual or gender identity. When I hear about that, I remember this brief passage. There are a few interpretations of what Jesus means when he says the Kingdom belongs to children: Is it their innocence, their willingness to trust, their societal status as unrecognized or not mattering that he is referring to? Jesus welcomes all. Reflect on what this means to you.