

Sermon for Sunday 1.5.16

Today we begin the month of May –the 5th month of the year. Can you believe it?

How time flies especially when you've been in Italy, taking in the beauty and the carefree way of life, drinking espressos in the morning and sipping Prosecco during lunch. Very hard to take.

In a church-life sense, today is the 6th Sunday of Easter and we continue to bask in the great fifty 50 days of Eastertide after the resurrection.

For me it is my favourite time of year, for it is a season of thanksgiving and triumph and a time when events of our faith tradition enfold us in divine love through the Gospel readings.

Next Thursday, for example, is the day of ascension when we celebrate the Risen Lord's ascension to the Father, and in just two weeks we will celebrate Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit who remains with us as our companion, guide and counsellor.

The gospel reading this morning is from chapter 14 in John's gospel and this chapter is largely about our relation to the glorified Christ.

To put this morning's gospel passage in context, Jesus had been nurturing his disciples – preparing them for his coming departure.

He was teaching them about the oneness of God and himself. "If you know me, you will know my father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." he tells them. "And those who love me will be loved by my father and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

It is in response to these words that Judas (not Iscariot as we are told) asks him "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?"

It was a common expectation that Jesus would perform a wondrous act that would convince everyone that he was Christ in the world.

However humility is the way of divine love and Jesus would reveal himself personally to individuals. "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."

Jesus would reveal himself by indwelling within each person who loved him and who would receive him within. No grandiose trumpet playing, drums beating and wondrous performances but rather a mutual indwelling of divine love personally.

Remember his words “The father and I will come and make our home with them.” These are words that provide us with a very homely image within ourselves where we dwell with the divine.

Jesus also assures us that the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit whom the father will send will remain with us and teach us everything and remind us all that he has said to us.

The word Paraclete, as Jean Vanier tells us “is one of those rich Greek words that are difficult to translate completely. A Paraclete is someone who defends and comforts and speaks up for and helps a weakened person. So the word Paraclete can be translated as advocate as well as comforter, consoler or helper. Etymologically, the word “paraclete “means, the one who answers the call.

What a beautiful name! God is the one who answers the cry of the weakened and those in need. A mother is a Paraclete for her child when she answers the cry of her little one, and holds and loves him or her.

Every time we look after a person in need and answer their cry, we become Paracletes. Jesus was a Paraclete for his disciples. The Paraclete is given to those who are lonely and need the presence of a friend, to those who are lost and poor in spirit and who cry out to God.”¹

The Holy Spirit is the supreme Paraclete, the divine carer who takes away the anguish of loneliness, brings presence, security, peace and communion – and the home within us becomes an ongoing well cared for temple of God

both in a corporate sense as our church community and also in a personal sense as individuals. This is why Paul said to his disciples in Corinth: “Don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?”

I believe in the gospels and especially chapter 14 we can’t help but hear the language of love. In the other readings this morning we hear this divine love in action both in past events and in future times.

¹ Jean Vanier, in *Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John*, Paulist Press: New York. 2004. p.260.

Acts recalls how positive response to a call can mean a coming to faith of an entire family group. Revelation speaks in apocalyptic language about a future reality when our God will dwell with us face to face.

And, as Vanier writes, in the here and now we are promised a peace that is not of this world. "Jesus promises us a peace that is not just a balance of forces or an absence of war. It is not just a good feeling inside of us, a feeling of centeredness, wholeness, quietness, stillness or inner silence. It is not merely an absence of inner conflicts or of desire, as early Greek philosophers taught.

No, this peace is more than all of these things combined. It is the trust that Jesus is there with us and in us. For Jesus **is** our peace. Peace is resting in the Beloved, having total trust in him. It is the peace of a child resting in the tender arms of her loving parent."²

A language of love that reveals Jesus very presence in our lives corporately and personally.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord we give you thanks for your love for us. Help us to take the time each day to dwell in its warm embrace. May we do as it does and go gently with ourselves and with each other. May all those things that consume our time and stir up anxiety lose their power in us. Empower us to surrender to this divine way of your indwelling spirit in us. Amen

² Jean Vanier, *ibid.* p.265.