

6th Sunday of Easter: May 17, 2020

St. Vincent De Paul Church, Baltimore

Reflections on Today's Scripture Readings

Acts 8:5-17 ♦ Ps. 66 ♦ 1 Peter 3: 15-18 ♦ John 14: 15-21

The world as we know it seems upside down and we cannot imagine what right side up will look like. As we continue to be challenged in so many ways during this strange and difficult time, and try to be priestly people of God, I personally found both hope and possibility AND the reminder of responsibility in today's scripture readings.

I find myself anxious about how I can make a difference about what the world will look like. What might I do differently for those around me, my friends and family, my community, my city, my country, my sisters and brothers everywhere so that we come out of this not the same but better? Everything seems uncertain and we can feel powerless. There is one thing about which we can be sure.

Jesus told the Apostles:

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be **with you always**, the Spirit of truth, ...”. “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

Jesus promised the disciples (and us), that through this Holy Spirit he would be so much within them that anyone seeing them would see him and therefore see the Father. How do I understand, accept and use this gift of life, a lifeline, and the source of hope and strength?

The gift of the Spirit dwelling within me is God's love dwelling in me. Am I open to it? Do I allow myself to be ever conscious of that Spirit within me? What do I do to make God's love visible, so that the world may see Jesus, come to the truth and choose to live in a different way?

Jesus makes it clear: “If you love me you will keep my commandments.”

“Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me.”

To love one another as Jesus loves us is the real test. How do I love those with whom I disagree, or who have hurt me or who are destructive forces in the world? What else does love motivate me to do to change the conditions that are causing pain and suffering in so many ways for so many people near and far?

In John's Gospel Jesus made a distinction between the world that does not recognize his commandments and those in the world that do. Philip, with his deep conviction in spreading Jesus message, was a powerful force in the conversion of the people of the city of Samaria. How did he do that? Was it not that Philip felt the Spirit dwelling within him, and opened himself for God's love to work through him?

I have noticed so many wonderful positive changes in the world around me during this time. People are kinder to each other and more helpful, neighbors who have never connected make time for each other every day across their properties, people who may have never exercised are walking, the air is cleaner, nature is happier and healthier, we are connecting with long lost friends and family, we are consuming less, and appreciating simpler ways of enjoying each other. Many of my friends are imagining the positive ways in which life could be different if we learn lessons from this crisis. I cannot help but feel that all of these are signs that there are those in the world who love Jesus and are living his commandments.

If I am open to the creativity of the Holy Spirit within me, as Pope Francis puts it, then I am open to discipleship and the possibility of being a force for good for those around me, touching them as Philip did, in ways that show each of them and our society as a whole the good news of Jesus for a better world.

As Peter tells us... be ready to respond to those who ask the reason for your hope! I want to be able to say because I know the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth is within me and among us!

Geraldine Sicola