

Our Lady of Lourdes
Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 9, 2010

Acts 15:1-2, 22-29
Rev 21:10-14, 22-23
John 14:23-29
Deacon Bob

Have you ever had the experience of remembering something that you heard or experienced some time ago but did not fully understand or appreciate at the time? In looking at a current situation it becomes obvious what that original experience was all about. I would imagine most of us can think of just such times. The apostles even though Jesus kept telling them that he must suffer and die and rise from the dead they just didn't get it. They could only see the present and their hope for the future with Jesus.

Jesus tells the disciples "I have told you this before it happens so when it happens you might believe." He is instructing them while he is still physically with them but he also let's them know and us as well that he is not leaving them alone. Often people who are dying offer final gifts. These are not material things but such gifts as reconciliation, words of love, a touch or a look that touches the hearts of those keeping vigil. What gifts did Jesus leave us and his disciples?

The first gift is love. He says those who love me will be loved by my Father and the Father will love them and we will make our dwelling with them. Falling in love with Jesus brings one into full relationship with the Father and Spirit. The reading from the Book of Revelation speaks about no need for a temple. This could have been meant for those when the Temple was destroyed to offer them some comfort. For us it is a reminder of the Trinity, God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit dwelling in each of us.

This indwelling love of God within us requires only one response. That response is as Jesus told us "to love one another." Today as we celebrate Mother's Day it is a wonderful way to reflect on the visible sign of God's love in the world. There is a story about four ministers discussing their favorite translations of the Bible. The first one said, "I like the King James version because of its beautiful English." Another said, "I like the New American Version because it is closer the original Greek and Hebrew." The third one said, "I like the Good News version because it is so easy to read." The fourth minister was silent for a moment then he said, "I like my mother's translation the best." The three were surprised and said, "I didn't know your mother made a translation of the Bible. He replied, "Yes, she translated it into everyday life and it was the most beautiful and convincing translation I ever saw."

Jesus also left us the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us know God's presence with us and within us and leads us and guides us in directions that bring us closer to God. During this Easter season our first readings are taken from the Acts of the Apostles which tell us of the early Church and how it struggled with various issues. All times have their struggles and questions and just as the Spirit was present to the early church the Spirit of God is also present to us today. Relationships change behavior and our relationship with the Holy Spirit can help us be open to change and it can affect our attitudes. There is a poem by Charles Swindoll entitled "Attitude" its last line reads, "The only thing we can do is play on the string we have, and that is our attitude...I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I

react to it...and so it is with you.” The presence of God through the gift of the Holy Spirit can surely help us to adjust our attitude.

The third gift that Jesus left was peace. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.” Notice he didn’t say my wish for you is peace or I hope you will have peace. It is not a wish it is a fact, he leaves us his peace. So what does that peace look like? What would it take for you and me to feel truly peaceful?

One might say, “I would feel peaceful if I had a job, a secure job.” Someone else might say, “I would feel peaceful if I could get out of debt.” Another might say, “I would feel peaceful if I could make it to retirement.” Still another might say, “I would feel peaceful if I had good health insurance or if I simply had good health.” Each of these answers has something in common, they have to do with security.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor who was executed by the Nazis said, “Peace is the opposite of security.” That takes some thought, “Peace is the opposite of security.” We might respond that that just is not right. If I just had this or that I would be secure then I would be at peace. Perhaps Bonhoeffer might respond, “No you would not feel peaceful, once you met that particular need, you would find another need. Peace isn’t what happens around you. Peace isn’t what happens to you. Peace is what happens inside you, down deep, at the core of your being.”

Bonhoeffer knew of what he was speaking. He was arrested for opposing Hitler. He realized that his chances of surviving the war were not good. He could have lived in fear of the day when his jailers would come for him. He chose not to do that, not to live that way. He did what he could not knowing what might be next. He prayed and he ministered to the other prisoners. When the guards did come he was able to go bravely and in peace. This is the peace that comes from having God in the center of one’s life. It is the peace that Jesus offers each of us.

We will hopefully never be a prisoner of war but we will certainly experience some loss or turmoil in our lives. How well we are able to respond depends in part on how well we have prepared to have peace as the core of our being. We prepare by regular prayer, by studying the word of God. We prepare by being an active part of the faith community of Our Lady of Lourdes. We prepare by remembering the story of Jesus, how his death was followed by his resurrection. We prepare by coming together to celebrate the Paschal Mystery and by receiving the Body and blood of Christ. These are the things that will help us be at peace both in good times and in the trying times of our lives.