

A Gospel Reflection by Deacon Peter Presdee May 17th 2020

In our world of today, faced with effects of CO-VID 19, the isolation of family and friends, job losses, and not even being able to physically, either personally or as a community, celebrate Eucharist, some may ask where is Jesus. We can empathise with the disciples at the Last Supper who were facing the imminent loss of Jesus as he foretold of his Passion and death. That was a time of fear, loss and testing of faith, a time not dissimilar to our contemporary situation.

However, Jesus gave assurances to His followers that far from being absent from them, his Death, Resurrection and Ascension would herald a continuance of his presence through the coming and permanent presence of the Holy Spirit. Our challenge is to recognise and place our trust and belief in this presence, whatever situations confront us.

This presence is realised if we obey the words of Jesus, and as the first disciples were able to, following Pentecost, to proclaim this presence to the world and invite others to experience the Love that gives real meaning to life.

For as Jesus says in today's Gospel in verse 15-17

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live.”

Jesus promise to His followers that He would not leave us orphans, but rather will come to us and we will live, assures us that we will not be left without Him, because the Holy Spirit (the *Paraclete*) is ever present to direct us, and to remind us of what Jesus has said.

Thus, in times of suffering, confusion, loss, isolation and mourning, Jesus is ever with us in our struggles, ever loving, counselling and comforting us through the power of the Spirit (the *Paraclete*). This Presence enables us and exhorts us to live lives that are not absorbed in bemoaning our own misfortunes, and ever seeking material and hedonist pleasures, but rather to be like Jesus and encourage others by our deeds and words to embrace His presence and thus grow the Kingdom of God. As Jesus did not leave us orphans we can believe with all confidence, notwithstanding the challenges and hurts in our lives that God's presence is truly with us in both our sufferings and joys, and the words of St. Mary Mackillop, that “where you are now, you will find God”, is a teaching that we can rely on, in whatever situation our lives are experiencing.

In conclusion the words of Donal Neary SJ in commentating on this Gospel are instructive:

“Jesus speaks in the gospel about being still alive, even after his death. Mostly we find Jesus alive in the love of others. The energy of love that is connected to the energy of God, for God is love. Other times we find God close to us in prayer; but where we can sense him alive mostly is in the ordinary and extraordinary loves of every day, in marriage, family, friendship and care for others.

Many of us do not realise that in this way we have been Christ-bearers. In listening to another, in care of all sorts, in putting ourselves out for the other, in working for justice and for peace the Spirit of God is alive and people are touched by God's love through the co-operation of ordinary men and women.”

Thus, in our present time, Jesus is alive in our prayers and our acts of love to one another. Health Workers serving the sick, welfare workers assisting the poor, the elderly and those suffering mental illness, those who visit the sick and anoint the dying and families supporting each other are but some examples of people being tabernacles of the Holy Spirit, the presence of Jesus, in our CO-VID 19 world.