

Pentecost: A Invitation to Discipleship.

In the Greek, crisis is not what we would interpret, as a time of calamity or disaster, it is a time of making a decision, like finding a fork or deviation in the road and having to decide which direction to take. Having to make decisions is unavoidable. And the decisions we make (even if we decide to do nothing) will always change us.

It begins as an inkling or a disturbance of the heart, a disquiet in the soul. And once someone becomes aware of this state the individual has the choice, to either dismiss it or follow where it may lead.

When someone decides to follow this inkling, they will find themselves on a road to even more decisions and revelations about themselves. Some revelations may be very rewarding, at least initially, or they may be very disturbing, revealing one's faults.

When we look at the life of the disciples with Jesus, we see that their 'journey' began with just such an inkling. The invitation of Jesus to his disciples was not a neatly 'worked out plan' but a curious invitation to 'Come see': 'come follow'. The first crisis (moment of decision) in the disciple's lives was to realize that they stood before a fork in the road, i.e., Do I pursue the road which Jesus is offering or stay where I am? Whatever they may have felt about their lives up to this point, the possibility of a new road and a new way of life was presented to through the invitation of Jesus.

Once on the journey with Jesus they would encounter many moments of crises. Often confronted with opposition and hostility, they would have to decide if they should go on. With each decision to remain with Jesus however, they invested more of their life in his teaching and relationship. And the desire to know more, to see more and to understand better, would grow in their hearts. Their focus on Jesus would become more intense, and their hunger, to discover more would grow ever deeper. Still not fully comprehending his 'blueprint for the future', they nonetheless allowed themselves to be drawn in allowing his influence to enter their hearts and imaginations.

Those who did not know Jesus as the disciples did would see Jesus as a threat to their way of life. The Pharisees and scribes wanted him out of their lives because in opening a different path, through his teaching and the miracles he worked, he touched their very souls. But for them, the inkling in their hearts was a form of madness. What he offered, did not fit into the world which they had created for themselves.

As Jesus moves closer to the events of Good Friday these moments of crises would become more real to the disciples and the stakes would become higher. Seemingly the disciples failed to persevere. At the foot of the cross there were only a handful of supporters. But their strength and the test of their loyalty was not the point of the journey of discipleship. The whole point of discipleship is understanding that God invites us on the journey, instructs us, accompanies us, and overcomes (for us) our human weakness. All we must do is to be disciples. Redemption is not about what we do but what God does for us.

While the two readings for Pentecost appear to be very different, we find in both St John's Gospel (Jn 20:19-23) and the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1-11) one simple similarity between the two accounts. They both draw on imagery found in the book of Genesis.

In the Acts of the Apostles we see the coming of the Holy Spirit restoring humanity to unity drawing on the allusion of the story of the tower of Babel. In that story the people, in an act of defiance turn

from God to build a tower, resulting in the fragmentation of humanity and bringing the world to a state of disunity.

The Gospel of John draws on the moment of the creation of humanity, as God 'breathes into the Adam's nostrils. This breath not only stirs up a physical life but also gives humanity a share in God's own life. And so it is with Pentecost, the breath of God, the Holy Spirit, stirs up life in humanity and gives humanity a share in Divine life.

At Pentecost we discover what the disciples longed to see and understand on their journey with Jesus. But even so, we still must go through the same process of discovery. Each of us must take note of the inkling in our hearts, the uneasiness in our spirits, to discover that we are being invited on the same journey of discovery.

Each of us must be prepared to follow ever more closely along the path which Jesus reveals. This is where we take risks, leave old ways behind, overcome our fears and the opposition of those who are trapped in a world of their own making. It is on this path that we come face to face with Jesus who surrenders himself to the Father. We will fail him occasionally or frequently, but that breath of God is still within us. The Holy Spirit of Pentecost reminds us that it is not about our successes or failures. It is about God's unquestionable, unconditional and unfailing love for us. And the Love that God calls us: 'Come follow'.

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