

5th Sunday of Easter
May 7, 2023
“Filling the Emptiness in Our Hearts”

Acts 6:1-7
1 Pt 2:4-9
Jn 14:1-12

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Probably, the greatest sadness we can experience in life is the loss of a loved one. To have someone, who is really close to us, die – is something that always affects us deeply. This is compounded if their passing is sudden and unexpected. Because, then, there was no way to prepare ourselves in advance for the loss.

Furthermore, that loss always creates a deep hole in our psyche. It will always be there, even though the edges become less sharp, or defined, with time. No other human love can ever fill that space – Because the one who once occupied it was special and unique – No other person can ever be exactly who they were or what they brought to their relationship with us!

There must have been a great sense of impending loss that the disciples faced on the night before Jesus was taken from them. They had become the intimate friends of Jesus for the preceding three years. They had grown to love Jesus – and depend upon him in so many ways. They had high hopes and great plans for what the future would bring.

But now, everything was going wrong. The powerful religious leadership saw Jesus as a threat – The scribes and Pharisees were, actually, seeking his life – And Jesus, himself, knew that his time was short.

This is the reason he gathered them for a special meal the night of Passover. Jesus wanted to give them a way through all that would happen in the succeeding hours. He would be leaving them as part of his journey to God – to the Father. But they were not to be troubled. He was going to the Father’s Kingdom and would prepare places for each of them. Moreover, once he had done that, he would be back for them to take them with him.

The disciples could not really understand what Jesus was saying. They were communicating on two different levels. Jesus was speaking in other-worldly terms – on the spiritual level of God and the divine. The disciples were understanding on a material level – the level of the only reality they knew.

So when Jesus told them that they knew the way that he was going – Thomas objected. “Lord, we don’t even know where you are going – So how can we possibly know the way?” To this, Jesus countered that he, himself, was the way – as well as the truth – and the life! In other words, Jesus was the way to the Father – He brought the truths of the Father – He shared the divine life of the Father! All they had to do was join themselves to Jesus – and they would come to the Father with him!

Still thinking in this world’s material terms – Philip spoke up: “Master, just show us the Father – and that’s all we need!” Almost in consternation, Jesus tells Philip that if he sees Jesus, himself – If he sees and understands who Jesus really is – Then, Philip should be able to see the Father! Because Jesus is in the Father – and the Father is in Jesus! They are unified in some marvelous, divine way!

Jesus said and did many extraordinary things at that Last Passover Supper with them. Although they understood so little of it at the time – fortunately, they would remember everything later. Because after that meal, the bottom fell out of their world! Jesus was gone – His human life was taken away – He would never be with them again in the way that he had been! Consequently, we can well-imagine the irrevocable loss they felt during those terrible three days!

Yet, Jesus was never really gone. The human soul and spirit can never be annihilated! It lives on! And it can live forever with God!

Furthermore, although no human person or love can ever fill the space of a departed loved one for us – God, Himself, can! God can and does come to us if we believe – If we have faith – If we have a relationship with Him in the depth of our heart and soul! Because Jesus, the Son, becomes present to us with our Baptism – Jesus is there at every Eucharist – He speaks to us through the scriptures – And he is always present whenever 2 or 3 gather in his name!

Furthermore, what is truly wonderful, is that God can give us a way through all the emptiness we feel with any human loss. And that way leads, ultimately, to Himself. This is as it was always meant to be –

For to paraphrase St. Augustine almost 20 centuries ago:

“God has made us for Himself, and He alone can fill the emptiness we feel in our human hearts!”

Amen.

May 7, 2023

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