

5th Sunday of Easter 2008

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Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and have faith in me. On a scale of 1-10 how troubled is your heart today? I think mine is an 8! So if you have troubled hearts what's troubling you on this beautiful marathon weekend? Is it the world that worries you? The war, the economy, the deflated dollar? Is it the housing market or your work? Is it personal issues like illness, aging parents, strained relationships? What is troubling you today? Maybe nothing. Maybe you are feeling completely at peace and ecstatically happy! Well Alleluia! Happy Easter!

That is what we are supposed to feel in this Easter Season. We are supposed to feel the peace and joy that comes from knowing that we are healed, reconciled, loved, known, embraced fully by the God who has created us. Are we there yet? Do we echo the words of Philip in the Gospel today, "Master we do not know where we are going, How can we know the Way?"

The Gospel today gives us a way out of our troubles, anxieties, worries. Of course it doesn't make those troubles disappear. But it may help to give us a little more of the peace and joy that is the Easter promise.

Jesus speaks to our hearts today very simply. He speaks words of faith, of hope and love. He asks us to trust God and trust him. That is what faith is all about. He invites us to hope that he will always be there for us. "I am going to prepare a place for you. In my father's house there are many dwelling places. I will come back for you and take you with me". He invites us to share intimately in the love that he has for the father and the father has for him. Faith, hope and love. Not abstract ideas but real lived relationship with the person of Jesus.

Sometimes when I ask people who Jesus is for them, the response I receive is "model, teacher, guide, Lord, Son of God etc." The answers usually refer to the titles that the Church gives him or the human life he led that inspires us to lead good lives. Jesus, of course, wants to be so much more than an inspiration for a good life. He wants to be the Way, the truth, the life for us. He wants to be the be all and end all that enables us to have life abundantly. He wants this first-hand, personal experience of him to be so much for us

that our hearts are not troubled no matter what we face and that we are not afraid of anything because he has given himself to us as the way, the truth and the life.

The challenge for us is how we see Jesus as so much more than an inspirational figure. I can't help but think of the Papal Visit this week where we have had a glimpse of the gentle, compassionate, smiling, joyful shepherd whom many did not expect to see in such a compelling way. Many expected to see and hear a critic, a judge, a teacher who would not give the American church a good evaluation. The person of Pope Benedict has been surprisingly loving and hopeful, proclaiming the joy of being a follower, a disciple of Jesus and recognizing him as the Way, the Truth and the Life.

And with Jesus too, we have to find ways of seeing more than the image and hearing more than the teaching. We are invited into a real relationship with him as one who lives in our midst and breathes the breath of life into us so that we may have faith, hope and love.