



Holy Spirit, Dwell with Us

John 14:23–29

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.
... If you loved me, you would be glad that I
am going to the Father, for the Father is
greater than I. I have told you now before
it happens, so that when it does happen you
will believe.*

May 1, 2016

Thoughts for the Week

Scriptures: Acts 15: 1-2, 22-29 • Revelation 21: 10-14, 22-23 • John 14: 23-29

I still recall with sadness the days when my mother Bernice sat pondering after the death of my father, so many years ago now. I especially remember her asking those near her, “what will happen when I am gone, who will take care of the kids, how will our family survive? My sister and I both struggled with those questions in our own personal ways, hardly knowing what to do or say.

Today as I reflect those sad days following my father’s death, I must say that we managed to survive, although with many difficulties. What helped us survive, I am convinced, my mother’s spirit, the love, the care, the, ever-present watchfulness had a lot to do with that which kept us moving closer together. My sister and I had not been close up to that point. But as the years wore on we became good friends and began to confide in one another and eventually enjoy each other’s presence. I can still remember the day it all started: we had just experienced a very moving spiritual experience at our Blue Water Reunion Grounds in Lexington, MI. We were walking out of the Youth Chapel, fondly known as the White Church, and my sister caught up with me, gave me a very rare hug and told me that she loved me very much. Even at that young age, I was moved to tears. We stood there in a grove of White Birch Trees, hugging and crying together. Others around us understood and walked on.

This same experience of near-despair must invade the conscience of many people when someone whom they have held in high esteem, indeed on whom they depended for life, is suddenly taken from them. Think, for example of the following examples drawn from life in our world today. Think of the despair the people of India must have experienced when their great liberator Mahatma Gandhi was suddenly shot. Yet, his spirit of bravery continued to give the people hope long afterwards. Today, with that same spirit of hope India is a strong and prospering nation.

I can remember also the days after President John F. Kennedy was shot: many people in our country were saying, “How will our country continue to exist and grow without him, without his leadership?” Even today, of course, Kennedy’s spirit still continues to rise up in the halls of government and we all remember the great spirit of statesmanship that he left to our country.

For those of you who are devoted users of Apple electronic devices, a cry of despair rose up some years ago when Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple died of cancer. People were saying, “Will this be the end of Apple, who will develop another I Phone? Well, Apple continues to grow and Steve Job’s spirit continues to subsist in that expansive development office in Cupertino, California. The people who work for Apple are no doubt saying: “We are not going to allow the spirit of Steve Jobs to be lost.”

The point I am trying to make here is that the spirit of great individuals has a way of underlying,

sustaining and giving hope for the future of their original undertaking.

As we read the gospel for this Sixth Sunday in Easter season, I'm sure we get the impression that the apostles and the other followers of Jesus must have had the same feelings described in the examples cited above. What are we going to do now without Him, what will happen to his great promise of the coming of the Kingdom of God; is this great adventure over now? Maybe we should go back to our fishing."

Well, as we all know from the experience of church in our own day, the end was not yet. Jesus promised to send his Father's Spirit to the disciples, to the church and to us. "Do not be distressed or fearful," Jesus says. "The Spirit of my Father will instruct you in everything I have told you."

The question for us today, of course, is this: In these sad days when Christians around the world are under great stress, will we give up on the Spirit of Jesus? How will each of us make the Spirit of Jesus live and grow in the small *Communities of Christ* we know best? Our faith assures us that Christ's promise will not fail, but, at the same time, it will not grow unless we do what we can to make it happen.

Prayer Thought – Ethiopia

Creator God, we give thanks for your great love for each of your precious children, and your vision for all creation to be at peace.

Forgive our pride of status, race, religion, possessions, and anything that keeps us separated from you and from our neighbors near and far. Guide us with your spirit of love and compassion to bring hope and healing wherever there is suffering and despair.

We seek your blessing of peace for the people of Ethiopia and for all nations. Strengthen and guide world leaders and all who work to abolish poverty, violence and oppression.

We pray for healing wherever natural resources are exploited or destroyed because of war. May the people of all nations promote just and equal sharing and respect of Earth's plentiful resources.

In the name of the Prince of Peace, we pray. Amen.

Stewardship Thought

"...do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." John 14:27

Our limited human understanding cannot begin to understand the immense power of God. Instead of trusting in God, we think we can control every outcome. Are you trying to make God laugh?

Tell Him your plans. The next time worry, anxiety or fear creeps in, thank God for all He has given you and trust He has a better plan for you.

Quotes of Peace for the Week

The real differences around the world today are not between Jews and Arabs; Protestants and Catholics; Muslims, Croats, and Serbs. The real differences are between those who embrace peace and those who would destroy it; between those who look to the future and those who cling to the past; between those who open their arms and those who are determined to clench their fists.

William J. Clinton, 1997

There is one armor that the world of men and women, as a world, has never yet put on. The churches have long bungled with its fastenings, but the world has gone unfended, and few have been those in whose hands the mystical sword of the spirit has shone with daily use. This armor, waiting to be worn, is the armor of brotherhood and sacrifice, the world of unselfishness, a conquering sword, with the power, where used, to unite the world in love. And there are none who may not put it on.

