

Easter 6

John 14:23-29

In the last evening he spends with the disciples before his death, Jesus tries to show them two elements of reality that are difficult to hold together: he is going away, yet he will not leave them orphaned. As they listen, the disciples have questions.

Jesus' emphasis is on reassurance. While he is going away, he will send the Advocate who will bring them further understanding and who will be with them always. Above all this gospel is about the profound love of God that Jesus has made known. The Spirit assures us we are never alone.

Yet we may feel the uncertainty expressed by the disciples. We have the same question; how will Jesus reveal himself to us? This is an intriguing question and one that the Thursday morning prayer group has been considering in detail for some weeks.

A good place to start is with the notion of desire. When we feel we want to be nearer God, to learn more we are motivated or prompted by God. The very fact that you are here today is because of the Spirit. It is the in-dwelling Spirit

that enlivens. St Paul says of prayer that there is a point where no words are necessary. There is only the deep groaning of the Spirit.

Jesus says those who love me keep my word, and we will come to them.

Clearly the initiative rests with God, but there are things we can do in order to put ourselves in the path way of the Spirit. Baptism is one. From that point we carry the word within. That gifting of the Spirit may lay dormant in some but for others it will spring to life.

But what is the essence of this indwelling? I am going to back to Francis Dorff's understanding of spiritual growth. I spoke of it two weeks ago. It is his thesis that the story of creation that we know from Genesis has much more to teach us. Thus far I have only explained Dorff's theory in a limited way. The story of creation tells us of activity in 7 days of creation. In the story, the initiative rests with God. However, Dorff proposes there is an 8th day of creation. That happens as we grow into our own creative potential. Dorff talks of our capacity to hear the Messianic heartbeat as stereo hearing. We see and hear in the world in that we call reality, but there is more potential for each of us to grasp in the spiritual world. I told you the story of Mordechai the young Jewish boy who refused to pray. He heard creativity in stereo when he was held against the beating heart of the rabbi.

The messianic heartbeat is the deep throb of creativity in ourselves and the universe. I have shared with you before the steps that Dorff suggests that the stages in the spiritual journey that lead us into creativity. Letting go in Trust, Letting be in Hope, and letting grow in Love. This is where the individual passes over....and into the 8th day of creation where something new and fruitful can emerge in God.

Our gospel today gives us good direction about may emerge from that place of deep creativity. This is where we will encounter the Lord. Jesus tells us the encounter will not only be with himself the living word, but the one who sent him. It will be God!

I wonder if this idea of the spiritual encounter intrigues you. My Ignatian understanding explains that he would say that when we find this internal sweet-spot through image, or words or gesture God is present. Mind you, many may not use the word God to describe what they experience there. For some this experience may be about the glory of nature and the rapture of beauty.

I wonder if you have noticed that the individual has to take an active stance in relation to listening of the voice of the shepherd, keeping his commandments and loving him. Ignatius taught a mode of prayer called the Examen which

orients us toward the in-dwelling spirit. Different spiritual writers choose different to describe the steps, but the purpose is always the same.

1. Ask God to guide you. 2 Give thanks for what God has given. 3. Review your day in the company of the Spirit. 4. Face your shortcomings. 5. Look forward to the day ahead. In Ignatian terms, these steps bring us into contact with God. Not because we are intellectualising so much as experiencing. If we let go, let down the barriers, something new may emerge in God. God is present and revealing. Our spiritual task is to seek.

It is possible to put these process focused steps towards God into a psychological framework. This week I watched a new ABC TV programme called Space 22. Each of the participants in this creativity based therapeutic experience holds some personal trauma. Each is seeking an inner path to wholeness. Through art-based activity each person is encouraged to let-go in order to be present to the experience that has caused them pain.

The accompanying therapist encourages the participants to stay in the inner place to enable any necessary healing to occur. I couldn't think of a clearer example of the peeling away layers in the real world to expose the place where God is waiting in the creative space of the spiritual world.

So I return to Jesus' words in the gospel. "They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and will reveal myself to them". This is where our spiritual encouragement is personalised by God. God comes to us in words, images, and memories. As is the case of the folk in Room 22 there may be a great deal of pain surrounding the place of where passing-over into the 8TH day of creation. This is the journey into wholeness.

It is the Spirit that assures us we are never abandoned even in this broken world. The Word who became flesh and lived among us continues to make his home with us even as he prepares our eternal dwelling with God.

AMEN

References

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- Hinkle Shore, M. Commentary on John 14: 23-29 WWW.
- Manney, J. A Simple Life-Changing Prayer Loyola Press Chicago 2011