

HOMILY EASTER SUNDAY 06 – A (Homily 02)

“Living in the Spirit”

(Acts 8:5-8; 14-17; 1 Pt 3:15-18; Jn 14:15-21)

Although we are a few weeks away from the celebration of Pentecost, it is as if the liturgists who chose the readings could not wait. The reception of the Holy Spirit is front and center in today’s readings for the Sixth Sunday of the Easter season.

As such, we are invited to live in the Spirit, and let that Spirit of the Risen Lord touch our lives to the core.

In the first reading, we see how God uses the persecution that started after the death of Stephen, the first martyr, to spread the very faith that the Jews were trying to destroy. Philip ends up in Samaria proclaiming Christ. That is one of the first things that would be expected of someone who is filled with the Spirit of the Risen Lord, to want to share that good news with everyone, which is what Philip does.

Significantly, there is a healing element to the presence of Philip as he shares the news of this new way of life brought about by the resurrection of Jesus and the Pentecost event. Though the healings may not be as dramatic in our times as they were then, certainly the power of the Spirit to heal especially broken relationships and divided communities, to bring peace where there is strife, to encourage and to empower people, is given to us by baptism and faith in Jesus.

The second reading informs us that our personalities will be transformed and mellowed. There will be a gentleness about us, and a spirit of reverence and respect for all others who differ from us. We will find within ourselves a new facility to forgive those who hurt us and do not understand us. We will even be able to suffer hardship and misunderstanding for the sake of the Gospel. Caring for others and the ability to share our lives with them, who we really are, as a way of building community, will be apparent. We will strive to be holy, blameless, doing only good, with a clear conscience, because the Spirit of the Risen Lord dwells within us.

In the end, according to the Gospel, our focus and priority will be to keep the commandments that Jesus gave us, which is to love God with our whole being, and to love all others as we love ourselves. It could not be put simpler than that. To do that is to walk with Jesus through each day of our lives, in communion with him, inspired by him, filled with his Spirit, and doing what he would do.

Someone who actually lived this way and exemplified many of these qualities was the late Edward Kimbley of Beauval, Saskatchewan. A humble Cree Métis elder and father of a large family, Edward worked at the Beauval Indian Residential High School as a janitor and watchman for 48 years. His quiet fatherly presence was a support to the students who could always turn to him for a kind word of encouragement or much needed wisdom. He attended mass every Sunday without fail and often on weekdays as well. After his retirement he took on the ministry of counting the collection, taking it to the store and getting a draft which he then put in the mail. When one parishioner suspected something was not right because the amount in the bulletin each week was always an even number, it was discovered that far from being dishonest, Edward was topping up the collection to make it easier to work with. He saw no need to go on pilgrimage each summer as so many others did, because he felt the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit was with him all the time. He was Beauval's Philip and Stephen rolled into one. The dining room at the residence was full with well-wishers when he retired, and the church full to overflowing by mourners when he died, an example to all of Christian life lived in the Spirit.

The Eucharist that we celebrate today is our way of proclaiming Christ and sanctifying the Lord. We are filled with the Spirit and commissioned to go out as did Philip and Stephen, to spread the good news and even suffer for the sake of the Gospel.

So as we come closer to the feast of Pentecost, let us also strive to live in the Spirit as did Edward Kimbley, and let the Spirit of the Risen Lord touch our lives to the core.

