

HOMILY SUNDAY 6-C FAREWELL DISCOURSE

“Sharing In The Life Of A Trinitarian God”

(Acts 15:1-2, 22-29; Psalm 67; Rev 21:10-14, 22-23; John 14:23-29)

A speaker once began his talk with the words, “I have so much to say. Where to begin? Where to begin?” A voice from back spoke up loudly, “As near to the end as possible!” The readings today are so rich that I feel a bit like that speaker.

Experience the Ascension and the peace of Jesus in your life through faith and love.

Each paragraph of the gospel today could be given a title: 1) “Loving Inter-relationship”; 2) “The Role of the Spirit”; 3) “The Peace of Jesus”, and 4) “The Ascension”.

In the first paragraph, God is portrayed as a family, a loving **Inter-relationship**. The Father eternally “births” the Son, gives life and love to Him totally and unconditionally. The Son eternally “receives” the Father’s love and life. The Son is totally open and receptive to the Father’s love, and reflects it back to him in obedience and praise. We can be part of that relationship of life and love, especially by reading, meditating upon and trying to live (“keep”) the word of God.

Some years back I was visiting a friend when his fifteen year old daughter came back from a soccer tournament. She burst into the house, dropped her bag on the floor, flopped on her dad’s lap, put her arm around his neck, and nestled her head against his for at least a minute, soaking up his love. He carried on with our conversation as if this was totally normal and expected. The other kids did not even notice, and his wife kept on preparing supper. This *was* normal in this household! I caught my breath and observed with awe this intimate father-daughter inter-relationship. This might be as close to a picture of heaven as I will see on this earth, I thought to myself, and felt so grateful for what I was seeing – a living out of today’s gospel.

The second paragraph of the Gospel states that the bond of love between the Father and the Son is so intense that it becomes a person, the **Holy Spirit**, the third person of the Blessed Trinity. The Spirit then dwells in us, who try to love and keep the Word of God. When Jesus is gone, the Spirit will be “with” the disciples as a dynamic power strengthening their relationship of faith in Jesus. The Spirit will also be “in them” enabling them to make the words of Jesus part and parcel of their lives. The Spirit-Paraclete (defence attorney) reinforces the disciple’s attachment to Jesus in times of struggle with the darkness without. Jesus does not desert his disciples - he gives us his Spirit which enlightens us from within, even now as we pray and share. The Spirit internalizes and grants a deeper understanding of the self-revelation of God, present in the person, words and example of Jesus.

Once when I was on an Oblate renewal program in San Antonio, Texas, my spiritual director encouraged me to see a counsellor, as I would never have that kind of opportunity again. Though very resistant, I obeyed him, found a counsellor and started telling him my experience of my struggle to forgive my father for the way he raised us as kids. He stopped me cold when he

interrupted me to say, “Sylvain, arguing with your father out of anger for all those years is not the same as sitting down with your dad and sharing your feelings of anger with him.” I was stunned, and knew exactly what I had to do. I went on a one day retreat and wrote a seven page letter to my deceased father sharing with him all my feelings about how he had raised us that I had never told him when he was still alive. I then read the letter out loud to a pillow, imagining that my father was listening.

When the counsellor asked me during our next session if it was more like an adult-to-adult relationship now, I was again stunned. That was it - we were friends now, who had shared feelings, not me the child and he the big daddy. When I drove home after that session the color of the world had changed – so amazing an experience was this. I felt like I had received my father’s spirit, and that he was now with me in a new way. What a powerful experience of receiving the Spirit of Jesus; the spirit of my father. What a powerful experience of the communion of the saints – if I was healing in my relationship with him here on earth, then I believe that he was healing in his relationship with me wherever he was. I felt so energized and excited – this was truly faith alive. What a gift that was – a gift that this gospel is inviting us all to share with Jesus in his relationship to the Father.

In the third paragraph, those who truly give themselves to God, surrender their lives and hearts to him, and seek to love God, and others as they love themselves, will experience a “serenity” that no negative situation or external force can influence or take away. Jesus does not promise everyday living which is free from turmoil. He offers us the divine gift of **inner peace** and serenity which allow us to carry on, no matter what, confident in Jesus’ victory over evil. We can be glad because Jesus accomplishes his life’s purpose in going to the Father. On the cross, Jesus was at peace – with the same peace he wants to give to us if we do his will.

Finally, the **Ascension** which Jesus mentions in the fourth paragraph is a key moment in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus which includes six distinct stages: Passion, Death, Resurrection, Appearances, Ascension and Pentecost. Jesus ascended into heaven, fully God and fully Human. He took our humanity with him into heaven. Everything in creation “moves upward” in the Ascension, so to speak. We share in the Ascension when, through the power of the Spirit of Jesus, given to us in Pentecost, we “Let Go”, forgive all who hurt us, and really and deeply accept all our losses in life. Then we can move on, in peace and joy, free of anger, resentment, sadness and grief.

The Eucharist we celebrate now brings it all together: God’s love made present in bread and wine, through the power of the Holy Spirit; the peace of Jesus that fills us as we celebrate; the acceptance and forgiveness of our God that “lifts us” as an Ascension closer to Him even as we worship, and commit ourselves to be a sign of God’s love to the world.

So, experience the Ascension, and the peace of Jesus in your lives, through faith and love.