

Reflection for Friday, April 24, 2020

You may remember when you used to be able to go into stores. You would see any number of products labeled “New and Improved.” I am always skeptical. If it does the same thing for the same purpose how different can it be? I’m not impressed unless there is some amazing difference in outcome.

But in those stories we heard all during last week, from those who met the Resurrected Jesus, they *did* seem to find the “new and approved” Jesus quite amazing!!

And Jesus seems to have much enlightenment to bring to them. He’s saying:

1. Look and see, it is I! I am the Jesus you knew, while I am also so incredibly much more.
2. Now when I reveal to you the Scriptures that pointed to me, through the Spirit you might grasp it.
3. I can show up wherever I want, when you least expect me. That’s to remind you that when you no longer see me, you will still believe what I promised: “I am with you always.”
4. You will certainly recognize me when you hear the sacred words: Took ... Blessed ... Broke .. Gave.

From the last supper, to Emmaus, to the morning on the beach and to forever.

As Sharon reminded us on Monday, we have moved liturgically from the immediate revelations of Jesus’ resurrection, as experienced by the early followers, to these days with the focus on *Jesus presence with us over time*.

Today we have “The feeding of the 5,000.” It is a prelude to the “Bread of Life” section of John’s Gospel coming next week. Jesus’ words and actions are a manifestation and a *sign* of his love and presence. So when later he says, “Take and eat. This is my body.” It carries a profound message.

In his book *Jesus: a pilgrimage*, Fr. James Martin remarks on this “body” of Jesus. “... During Jesus public ministry, his offering of his body was made visible: the Gospels speak frequently of his walking, climbing, sailing. Think of all the places Jesus *took* his body”... all over Galilee and Judea; to the desert, to Bethany, Cana, Jerusalem and more.

Jesus’ generosity did not depend on people’s appreciation. These two ways of offering himself- by *going* where people needed him and by offering his actions for *imperfect people* – were united at the Crucifixion, when he offered his entire body for an imperfect humanity.

We are called to give of ourselves as Jesus did. To bring our bodies – ourselves – to places where we are needed.

But it can be difficult. *Selflessness* costs because we are always giving for an imperfect person or group; the gift may not be appreciated or even acknowledged. (We can think of many examples in families and during these times.) It's hard to give yourself, to say in *all* these situations, "This is my body (my energy, emotion, strength) given for you."
Martin *Jesus*: p. 342-3

This may be even more difficult when we are in such isolated conditions as we are now. Perhaps *that is* the challenge of the moment. It may be more important to *take* the inner "body," the energy of our mind and spirit, rather than the physical body, to be blessed and given.

How are we attentive to those we know may need more assurance or contact to manage this stress? Can there be a given time to bring your body to your doors for a "Happy Minute" and greet one another from a safe distance? (Like those singing from their balconies?) Where is the energy being sent from your increased prayer time? Are you persisting in writing your letters (or emails) for the needed legislation for our national well-being?

We need an outpouring of the creativity of the Spirit suited just for these times. You may remember Clarissa Pinkola Estes once said: "My friends, do not lose heart. *We were made for these times*. ... Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. ... In my uttermost bones I know something, as do you. It is, that there can be no despair when you remember *why* you came to (this beautiful, needful) Earth ... *who* you serve ... and *who* sent you here."

Let us go forth to be witnesses in our lives to our Risen Jesus, present with us *always*.

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