

Fifth Sunday of Easter Year C April 24, 2016

*Resurrection the Eternal Kiss*

Paul, Barnabas, and other Apostles, are on a mission. Faith is being spread, and churches are rising up all along the Mediterranean coast. Near places where our Holy Father, drew the world's attention, again last week! The Greek island of Lesbos is once more, a place where faith is again at work, in the plea of Syrian refugees for dignity. The Holy Father himself delivered twelve no less, such migrants to safety and hope. See the connection! During the time of the Apostles though, these places, we must remember were not Jewish and certainly not Christian territories.

People in these towns and villages were polytheistic and knew only little of Jesus. The ideas and words of the Apostles were somewhat of a novelty to these folks. The Church in this period was just getting off the ground. Many didn't yet have bishops, priests, and deacons to lead and serve them.

It is though, the beginning of a new heaven and a new earth. First testament teachings, though they have served well, receive the ultimate upgrade package. It isn't that teachings of old are erased of value. Only that humankind must undergo a merciful and life-saving transfusion. Be restored, we might say in God's palliative care unit.

Through Jesus' resurrection, God nurses humankind to full life, making all things new and beautiful again. And all this made possible, by the spilled blood of Christ! The ancients believed life itself, was carried throughout the body, from the heart via the bloodstream. An idea today more spiritual than scientific!

Start-up organizations, as the Church is in the time of the Apostles, are known to generate, a certain buzz of excitement. Outsiders glance at them with curiosity. However, people's inquisitive energy bursts, sparked by headlines, often amount to little more than a fad or something trendy, related perhaps to celebrity. Sure, these movements stimulate short-term highs, but they usually pass away with our first disappointment! The Apostles however are different and certainly the Holy Father and Patriarch Bartholomew lending their tremendous appeal to the plight of Syrian refugees, again arouse something deep within us. They are bishops and the Apostle's successors. Striking a cord, among a still fledgling people of God!

News of the resurrection, brings to humankind a movement, much deeper and more glorious, than any fad. News of full and eternal life invigorates tired hearts and spirits, like royal crocuses lifting from the cool earth of springtime! This is why, after two thousand years Christians continue to gather around these tables of Word and Eucharist?

People of God relive this experience, just like we might remember our first kiss. Clumsy perhaps, but endearing none-the-less!

In John's Gospel today, Jesus packs God's teaching into one concise mantra. "Love one another as I have loved you". OK, but doesn't God speak about love on numerous occasions? In Leviticus it even says "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" Nothing here should sound very radical to any Jewish or even pagan listener. What are new are not the instructions, but rather the enriched context, from whence they are delivered.

Our Jesus speaks this passage from His place within the Holy Trinity. For of course, only God decrees commandments. And now so does Jesus. We are called little children and not brothers or sisters. For while young in faith, we too are none-the-less, Father, Son and Holy Spirit's precious offspring!

And so Jesus instructs us to Love our wife or husband, love our children and grandchildren, Love our parents and grandparents, Love our Religious community, Love our neighbour with the same measure and intensity by which we are loved by God. The benchmark is set! But how are we doing with this commandment? Oh sure it's easy to love these nice people, around us here today at St Peter's, but what about the others? You know exactly who they are?

To approach understanding the love, Jesus teaches, we need look at how John uses the word glory. There is not a single drop of God's love, Jesus retains for Himself. Rather, Our Lord empties Himself completely. Serving humanity from the holiest vessel ever, through which mercy, kindness, and compassion have ever flowed. We must remember too, it is not a partial exchange, or a negotiable give and take kind of setup, Father, Son and Holy Spirit live. Instead it is a total and complete sharing and one Jesus invites us to take our place within.

The creator/creation relationship, by Jesus' resurrection, matures and outgrows any rewards and threat systems, and is thereafter probably better characterized as a mad love affair. The glory of Father, the glory of the Son, and the glory of the Holy Spirit is the promise of glory, believers hold in our hearts. But again can we believe, we are that Beloved and perused by our God?

Now believing God loves me in that way is one thing, but my neighbour? And that I should love my neighbour as God loves me! If it all sounds too much, let us consider a parent with their newborn child. Or the elder guiding their child to care selflessly for others! Or the single person giving of themselves to the marginalized! Peace, Justice and Communion is always the product of God's love, and the manner by which the world will know we are followers of Christ.

There is nothing about love that allows it to be collected, gathered or possessed. It can only be joyfully and freely shared and re-distributed.

Perhaps you've heard it said, if you love something, you will set it free. If it returns, it always was and will be yours. If it never returns, well it never was yours to begin with. If it just sits in your living room, calls out your name all hours of the day, relocates your stuff, eats all your food, uses your phone without asking, takes your money, and never behaves as if you actually set it free in the first place, well you maybe either married or gave birth to it! "Amoris Laetitia". Indeed (The Joy of Love)!

Amen