



Come and See!

May 26, 2019

The Word...

'It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage. If you keep free of these, you will be doing what is right.'
(from Acts 15:1-2. 22-29)

"I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you."
(from Jn 14:23-29)

Pondering the Word...

How real is the Holy Spirit in your life? Do you consult the Spirit for guidance, not just for big decisions, but for everyday ones as well?

The importance and seriousness of the decision referenced in today's first reading cannot be overstated. The leaders of the new church issue a statement that absolves Gentile converts from the burden of circumcision. This is a huge deal and likely causes some Jewish Christians to abandon the Way. Throughout this section of Acts, though, we are told the disciples "fell silent." They allowed themselves time to listen for the whispered guidance of the Spirit.

Perhaps Peter, James, and the other Apostles hearken back to Jesus' words to them before his death: 'the Spirit will remind you of what I have said and preached and lived.' 'The Spirit is the one who will provide the guidance, balancing God's commandments and Jewish law with the commandment that I have just shared with you: Love one another.'

Living the Word...

Anyone who's lived long enough has faced situations that require a balance between strict adherence to the law with the reality of the need right in front of us. It may happen more commonly with civil laws as we have seen played out in nonviolent protests to war, bigotry, and more recently, to the treatment of refugees and immigrants. I'm sure we can all recall times when the call to be loving and compassionate takes precedence over an ecclesial rule: for those of us obliged, sitting with a sick child or elder causes us to miss Sunday Mass; or a more common example: Who remembers teaching their children to say thank you for gifts they dislike or already have rather than to say what they actually think? (what psychologists call "prosocial lying" which is for the benefit or protection of the other, as opposed to "antisocial lying" which serves to benefit ourselves.)

I always try to remember the wise words of my mother who told us that whenever we are called to provide advice to ask the Spirit to guide our lips. I know she always prayed to the Spirit to guide her decisions as well. Consider making a special effort to ask Christ's Spirit to guide you this week as you are faced with decisions, big and small. What does Jesus' command to love call you to say or do?

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

May 27: *Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy upon their couches.* (Ps 149)

Forgive me, but every time I read about the people praising God from “their couches,” I imagine a bunch of people watching a sporting event on TV, praying for the last-second goal or basket, then leaping for joy when their team wins. ☺ Most scholars think this expression means praising God does not cease and goes well into the night, but also reminds the people how fortunate they are to have comfortable places to sleep! As it should be for us as well. Think about how peacefully your repose will be if the last thing on your lips as you drift off to sleep is praise and thanksgiving for your ever-loving, ever-merciful Father!

May 28: *“But I tell you, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you.”* (Jn 16:5-11)

I wonder if the disciples are thinking, ‘Oh, don’t rush off, Jesus. We’d like you to stick around and continue all the wonderful things you’ve been doing! We’re not really ready for this ‘Advocate’ you speak of, anyway.’ But our Lord knows the importance of allowing us to accomplish things for ourselves; it is essential to our sense of self-worth. So God empowers us with free will and Jesus empowers us with faith and his Spirit that we might move forward to *“do even greater things than (he has) been doing.”* (Jn 14:12) It might be appealing at times for us to sit back and let the Lord do all the work, and in reality, what we accomplish in his name is due to his blessings and his grace. But that grace comes to bear fruit in the world through our words, our hands, and our feet. What an awesome role we have to play! What an awesome Spirit we have been given!

May 29: *“I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now.”* (Jn 15: 9-11)

How would you react to someone saying these words? I imagine Peter responding with a comment like, ‘Oh you can tell *me*, Lord. I can bear it!’ We don’t like to be told we are not quite ready for something. We want to believe we are wise and strong enough to deal with whatever is in store. In the study of cognitive development there’s a concept called scaffolding. Like a building scaffold erected story by story, once we have set a good foundation based on a child’s developmental level, we encourage them to go a bit higher, just beyond their reach. Our spiritual development is similar. Be patient. God knows when we are ready for the next step.

May 30: *Jesus said to his disciples: “A little while and you will no longer see me, and again a little while later and you will see me.”* (Jn 16:16-20)

“One might almost say that an apparition is human vision corrected by divine love...The miracles of the Church seem to me to rest not so much upon faces and voices or healing power coming suddenly near to us from afar, but upon our perceptions being made finer, so that for a moment our eyes can see and our ears can hear what is there about us always.” (Willa Cather, from *Death Comes for the Archbishop*) Do you have trouble seeing or hearing the Divine? Pray for the grace to experience for yourself *“what is there about us always.”*

May 31: *“Brothers and sisters: Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation.”* (Rom 12:9-16)

This is an option for the readings today, the Feast of the Visitation when Mary goes to see her cousin, Elizabeth. I encourage you to use this passage for an experience of Lectio Divina—Holy Reading. Read it slowly a few times; read it aloud. What word or phrase resonates with you right now? Consider it and what it means to you and then share your thoughts and feelings with God. Let your conversation with God come to rest in your heart as prayer. Listen for the whispered wisdom of the Spirit.

Jun 1: *(Apollos) had been instructed in the Way of the Lord and, with ardent spirit, spoke and taught accurately about Jesus, although he knew only the baptism of John.* (Acts 18:23-28)

John preached repentance through baptism with water. Jesus preached salvation through his Holy Spirit. We can only receive Christ’s Spirit if we truly recognize our ongoing need for it by acknowledging our weakness. Christ’s sacrifice was *“once for all”* (Heb 10:10), but to avail ourselves to the fullness of his presence, we return to the wellspring of mercy and forgiveness to bring about a true change in our hearts.