

Fifth Sunday of Easter



We often hear Jesus share a special greeting in the form of *shalom* or *peace*, indicating that we are not to worry or let our hearts be troubled. Yet, we also find times where Jesus himself was troubled, notably in the Garden of Gethsemane and while struggling to deal with the death of his friend Lazarus. Still, he assures us that he knows the way through death, leading us to new life and peace.

Most of us want to know where we're going before we depart on a journey. This is especially true of any spiritual journey we undertake. When we begin recovery and start working through the Twelve Steps with a sponsor or trusted guide, we find moments when we might ask the same question we hear Thomas ask in this Sunday's Gospel Reading: "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus replies that *he* is the path—the path home to the Father.

*Jesus said to him,
"I am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me.
If you know me, then you will also know my Father.
From now on you do know him and have seen him."*

To know Jesus is to know the Father because everything Jesus has done came directly from his relationship with the Father (intimately referred to as Abba or "the Father is in me" by Jesus). Sunday's Gospel Reading goes on to conclude:

*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.
How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?
Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the
Father is in me?
The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my
own.
The Father who dwells in me is doing his works.
Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is
in me,
or else, believe because of the works themselves.
Amen, amen, I say to you,
whoever believes in me will do the works that I do,
and will do greater ones than these,
because I am going to the Father."*

What *works* is Jesus referring to and how can we expect to perform *greater ones than these*? The works of Jesus include compassionately reaching out to the unwanted and the unwashed. Jesus now gives loving service through the hands of each of us, even if our action is as humble as reaching our hand out to the newcomer in recovery or at church.

Let us not forget that along with the command to remain in him is the promise that Christ remains in us. What we go looking for, we go looking with. Finding opportunities to identify God living within us can radically transform who we are, what we think, and how we behave.

A humble confidence begins to grow—not in our own abilities but in the Spirit of Christ that dwells within us. We recognize the Spirit of Christ in others and can approach relationships differently. We begin to see the fruit that God bears through us, which allows us to endure the pain that comes along with pruning.

This concept was not overlooked by the pioneers of 12-step recovery as it is generally expressed in the AA Big Book:

"For deep down in every man, woman, and child, is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of others things, but in some form or other it is there. For faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and miraculous demonstrations of that power in human lives, are facts as old as man himself.

We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 55).

Reflection Questions

- How do you maintain service to others and how does it impact your recovery?
- How are you seeking Jesus as *the way, the truth, and the life* in relationship to what is going on in your life today?
- How do you recognize the Spirit of Christ in others and within yourself?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Acts 6:1-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19

Second Reading: 1 Peter 2:4-9

Gospel: John 14:1-12