The Fifth Week of Easter

The Fifth Week of Easter begins with the ongoing story of the life of the Spirit in the early community. So full of life for preaching the Word, the apostles select deacons to help, so no one is neglected. In the Sunday gospel Jesus tells us not to let our hearts be troubled by his apparent absence, for he is going to prepare a place for us, in fact, he is the "way, and the truth, and the life." If we believe in him - this is, stay connected with him - we will do even greater works than he did.

All week, as we read about the inspiring development in the early community - with the acceptance of the good news by the Gentiles - we experience the assurance of Jesus.

Even on Monday, when we break our cycle of readings to celebrate the Feast of St. Mark, we hear that after the Ascension, "the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs."

The Gospels this week continue the "Last Discourse" of our Lord, taking chapters 14 and 15 of the Fourth Gospel.

In these marvelous chapters we experience Jesus consoling his disciples with the gift of his peace, which is different than the peace the world offers.

What Jesus gives is a relationship as close as a vine is to its branches. He calls us to remain connected with him so that we can remain fruitful. Without him, we dry up and wither. Plus, so united with Jesus, we can ask him for whatever we need to be fruitful. His invitation is for us to remain in his love, to make our home there. The resulting relationship is that of a friend. And this friendship is his gift to us - not our choosing him, but Jesus choosing us as friends who can open our hearts to him.

Therefore, in this relationship of connectedness and fruitful love flowing to us and through us to others, Jesus says that the one command he gives

Daily Prayer This Week

We can hold the words of Jesus in our hearts all week. As we do, we will discover their attractiveness and invitation. We will also encounter resistance in ourselves and in others.

It takes practice to stay focused in the background of our daily life. We all have years of habit to overcome. However, we can practice letting this consoling message of Jesus find a place in our conscious awareness at various points in our day, whether it is in the shower, while getting dressed, or simply whenever we are on our way from one place to another. Sometimes it will take a conscious effort to let these thoughts replace the thoughts that are there already. In the background of our day is where our worries reside. It's where we carry anxiety and stress. Sometimes it is where we carry on imaginary conversations with others or "replay" past conversations. Often a song or piece of music just replays over and over.

This is a great week to get in touch with our deepening desires and to let my conversations with Jesus grow in friendship. The easiest way to do this is to simply say simple ordinary things - the very way I would say them to a close friend. Some examples might offer words that will inspire our own conversation with the Lord who loves us.

"Jesus, every time I hear you say I don't have to let my heart be troubled, I pause. I sense you are pointing to the troubles I'm working through today. You're asking me to let go of them, aren't you? I'd like to, Jesus, but some of this is big stuff. It scares me. I know some of what I need to do, but I put it off. I know what I'm avoiding. It helps to focus on your love for me this week. I guess what I really need to ask you for today is that you let me trust you more completely. It is really nice these days to feel that you are so close to me, and that I'm not alone today."

"I haven't been very connected to you, Jesus. This conversation is difficult because it reminds me the embarrassing stuff I keep doing - even though right now, I'm ashamed to talk about it in your presence. Please forgive me. Some of this I want to bring to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, so that I can be re-connected with you again. I need a 'turning point,' Jesus. Thank you for being there."
us is that we love one another - that we stay loving and fruitful.

Finally, Jesus reminds us that if the world didn't like his announcing and living of this good news, then it won't like our announcing and living it either.

All of this leads us to the 6th Sunday of Easter where in the gospel, we have the anticipation of the Pentecost with Jesus promising he would not leave us orphaned: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth."

"Jesus, the morning and afternoon have been so good. Just touching base with you has been so good. It sure beats being crabby and angry and judgemental so much. You know how busy I can get and then I start getting off-center. I want to go home today and just surprise my family. Rather than taking the stresses of the day out on them, let me have the grace and focus I need to pay attention to each of them, to ask about their day, and to listen with care. Let me get out of myself to compliment them and affirm their goodness and gifts, and most of all, to tell them by my way of being with them that I love them."

"Good night, Jesus. Thank you for today. Let me put everything aside tonight. I know you will be with me all day tomorrow."

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