

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 17, 2020

There are few things more heartbreaking than the images of children left orphaned by war or natural disasters. The empty look, the blank stare, the terror, and anxiety in their eyes all show the pain of loneliness, the shock of being abandoned, and the fear of the uncertain future. It may have been that look that God saw on the face of the first human being, Adam when God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone." It may have been that look that Jesus saw on the faces of his disciples at the last supper when He reassured them and said: "I will not leave you orphans." Jesus promised to remain present to His disciples, and His Church forever in the person of the Holy Spirit. This was His parting gift, but imagine if Jesus had asked the disciples to choose what they wanted as His parting gift.

Someone has composed a list of possibilities. In response to their requests, Jesus could have promised them an easy mission among nearby people, for an easy commute. Jesus could have guaranteed them fame, popularity, and a warm welcome wherever they went. He could have promised that they would be immune to prejudice, hostility, and rejection. He could have promised them peace without a price, and justice without hard work and sacrifice. He could have promised them good health and long life without suffering or pain. The disciples, like many of us, would have been happy to be given any of these promises from the Lord, but the commitment Christ did give and still gives, goes beyond all of these. "I will not leave you orphans," He said. "I will come to you."

Christ knew what all good parents know. Even with the ability to shower children with material gifts, being present, being there to provide support and guidance, is always a higher gift. Christ's promise to remain in us is an example of what's called divine initiative, God acting first, gives us an example of how we are supposed to live, by being faithful and present to each other as Christ is to us. This could be a way of deepening a much-needed sense of community as we face the Covid19 challenge together. Cooperating with health safety rules, being less critical, more patient, and keeping a sense of humor can all help to keep things in perspective.

Writing about how the indwelling of Christ's Holy Spirit helps us face the challenges of life with confidence; Fr. Desmond Knowles writes: "In the struggle to build a better world, we are His instruments charged with opening ears, eyes, and hearts to what is good, true and beautiful in God's world. We do this by living lives of remarkable goodness in unspectacular ways. If we are willing to put our lives in His hands, He will accept and bless them and make such use of them as will be beyond our greatest expectations."

Father Valentine

Scripture Readings: <http://usccb.org/bible/readings/051720.cfm>