

Sight Unseen: We Have An Advocate

With Pentecost upon us, I found a particular passage in the Gospel reading for this coming weekend from John (John 20:19-23) grabbing my attention.

The disciples are locked in the upper room. They're hiding from the Jews. They're being harassed, threatened and persecuted for being associated with Jesus when he was alive and for being identified as his followers.

Then, Jesus came and stood in their midst. He said to them, "Peace be with you."

The next verse says, "When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side."

The disciples then rejoiced and Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you."

As I reflected on these early passages in the Gospel reading, I couldn't help thinking, wouldn't have the disciples - the chosen apostles of Jesus - recognized him without seeing the wounds in his hands and his side? After all, they followed Jesus from region to region, town to town during his three-year ministry. They ate with him, slept with him, even prayed with him. They watched him perform miracles and they sat with him at the Last Supper. But after the Ascension, they felt abandoned, uncertain and afraid.

Jesus was gone.

Yet, it seems in the Gospel reading, Jesus had to show the disciples his hands and side just so they would believe it was actually him! It was almost like they didn't hear Jesus the first time when he said, "Peace be with you" because they were trying to figure out if it was really him.

The remainder of the Gospel reading has Jesus telling the disciples that his Father sent him, then breathing on them to impart the Holy Spirit, so they might go out, preach the Gospel and forgive sins.

We can be like the first disciples. We, too, like our disciples, can sometimes not

recognize Jesus or the Holy Spirit in our midst when life gets tough. We can be afraid, uncertain of what the future holds because we can't see our risen Lord - or see the wounds in his hands and side - and may not recognize his wonderful blessings of his presence in our midst on a daily basis.

Easter Sunday gives us the wonderful and salvific miracle of the resurrection. Now that Pentecost is upon us, we remember and relive the imparting of the Holy Spirit on the disciples - not just those first 12, but all of us who by our baptisms are disciples, called to live and share the Gospel.

I needed to read these Gospel passages. With the responsibilities of fatherhood, my deacon ministry, coaching my daughter's softball team, helping get two other children to their softball and baseball activities, being a blogger and myriad other things, I was having difficulty of lately "seeing" Jesus in the daily haze and confusion of my life.

But I am reminded after reading the Gospel reading for this coming Pentecost Sunday that I don't need to see our Lord to receive his grace of peace. I just need to pray often and believe that the Holy Spirit is with me regardless of where I am or what I am doing. The Advocate is by my side at all times, walking with me during times good times as well as times of busyness, uncertainty, fear or confusion.

Peace be with you!



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