

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, A May 25, 2014

First reading: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17 *Philip proclaimed Christ in Samaria*

Psalm 66 "Let all the earth cry out to God with joy"

Second Reading: 1 Peter 3:15-18 *Always be ready to give a reason for your hope.*

Gospel: John 14:1-12 *If you love me you will keep my commandments.*

♪♪ Live like a prayer now, deep in your heart.

Live like a prayer now, 'cause we are all a part.

Live like a prayer now, if we want to survive. We are, we are all alive. ♪♪

I love that song - it was composed by Ellen Klaver and it's on an album by Magpie, Greg Artzner & Terry Leonino, who live in Middleburgh and travel around the world.

I sang that song because the call of the Gospel that we hear today is to become a prayer, that is, to live the words we hear & say and sing at Mass.

Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Which commandments do you think he meant?

We heard part of the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of John today. In the next chapter, Jesus sums up all his commandments when he says, "This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you." And he describes the attitudes that make that love possible when he teaches us to pray the prayer we call the Our Father. To love as Jesus loved is to live like a prayer. And, more specifically, to live the Lord's Prayer.

The Our Father is a prayer we all know; A prayer that is not only the prayer of Christians, but which expresses the hope of Israel & the deepest desire of the whole human race.

Let me sum up the commandments of Jesus given in this prayer:

1. *Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.* ...- that means we are all one family. That God is father to us and to Jesus, so we are all brothers and sisters, and are commanded to live & love like sisters and brothers.
2. *Your Kingdom come* - that means we need to work for God's Kingdom, for what is good for the whole human family, not just what feels good to me or even what benefits my circle of friends or my family.
3. *Your will be done* - that means I have listen to what *God* wants at any moment. It may be what I want, or it may be something else. But be careful what you ask for - the Lord will answer if you dare to ask what is *God's* will for me today.
4. *Give us this day our daily bread* - Accept everything as a gift, and share what you have with those who are hungry.

5. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us: Now that is where the rubber hits the road, isn't it? That does not mean to excuse, or be excused - we are called to forgive other people *and* ourselves. We are called to name and reject the wrong that is done - by me or someone else. It means to let go of grudges, bitterness, the burden of resentment - as individuals, as communities & as nations. Because of the grace of the Resurrection, we are a community of forgiven-forgivers, and we are called to live that way.
6. Lead us not into temptation...- The Spanish is more accurate to the original language, "*no nos dejes caer en la tentacion*" which means, "*do not let us fall into temptation.*" We are praying that the Lord will give us eyes and ears to see what is right. We are asking for the vision not to be fooled or conned by greed, lust or fear.
7. Deliver us from evil, & from the Evil One. Set us free to see Christ in others and to be Christ for others.
8. For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. The world & the Church belong to God & Christ, they are not anyone's private property.

You may ask, How can **I** do that, I'm weak and a sinner? And you and I certainly are!

The answer is that we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the presence of Christ with you, that's what the Gospel says today. The Holy Spirit is called the "Paraclete" (not parakeet). That's Greek & it's a title. It can be translated as "Advocate" & one of the meanings of the Greek is "defense attorney." (That is my favorite).

Jesus was an advocate for the ones he walked with during his life on earth, that's why the Holy Spirit is called *another* advocate. It is the Holy Spirit who is with us during the most difficult times and gives us the power to live the commands of Jesus.

Jesus makes a promise in the Gospel we heard, "*I will not leave you orphans.*" The Spirit kept that promise for Philip and the first followers of Jesus.

And one of the first places the Gospel went, outside of Jerusalem, was Samaria. Philip preaching peace to the Samaritans would be like Israelis helping Palestinians & vice versa today. That's the miracle Pope John Paul II prayed for when he said, "*No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness.*" If his words were more lived more practically, perhaps there would be peace in the land where Jesus lived. We pray that Pope Francis can be a channel of that peace while he visits the Middle East and the Holy Land this week.

The Holy Spirit kept the promise of Jesus for the people Peter wrote to, giving them the power to admit they were followers of Jesus, even if it meant suffering or death. That Spirit helped to spread the Good News throughout the world, despite and even *through* the persecutions that scattered the apostles & other followers of Jesus throughout that world.

The same Holy Spirit will give us the power to live the command of Jesus,  
if we let it happen.

If we accept the love of God, trust the power of God's Spirit, and live the Lord's Prayer.

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