

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Sixth Sunday of Easter

There is an underlying plan to all that Jesus did. The Incarnation, his life and message, his death and Resurrection, unfold as if they were one, two, and three in a series of orchestrated events. Jesus comes as *the* expression of God's relationship with us. Thank God we have the Gospels to help us take in the whole of the plan. In brief, his plan is about how to live a full life and become more aware of God's presence with us and others throughout our lives. We are never alone, even though at times it may seem that way. Jesus promises that God's Holy Spirit will assume the major role in the plan once the work of Jesus on earth is completed. God will not abandon us but will continue to dwell *with us, in us and among us*.

We live in the Easter Season. We are living out "the rest of the story." The Risen Christ comes and goes in the post-Resurrection period. He promised that a kind of "Act III" would soon begin. We celebrate the beginning of the era of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. At his Last Supper Jesus informed his closest friends that they would never be alone. This Sunday's Gospel reading describes his conversation with them at that time.

A Gospel Word for the Home

John 14:23-29

Parents often carry pictures of their children with them wherever they go. The children "inhabit" their purses and wallets. When children move from their parents' home, they are kept in mind through framed pictures that decorate walls and tables. The custom of picture taking is widespread these days. What pictures do is remind us that wherever we have scattered as a family, we remain in each other's hearts and minds. Memory keeps presence alive.

Today's Gospel reading works in the same way. Jesus knew that he was on the way out of this world. His death was imminent. The forces of evil and destruction were already being organized against him. But he was going to subvert their desire to rid the world of his presence by first his Resurrection, and second by the sending of the Holy Spirit. It's truly a mystery, but one that brings us the experience of deep peacefulness: we remain with God as God remains with us.

Parent Survival

One of the great challenges we face every day is *to be present to each other*. Achieving this is far from easy. We confront countless distractions, especially in today's world where media and noise are so constant. An important discipline in both human life and in our spiritual life is to develop a deep awareness of those around us.

This requires focus, concentration and a letting go of "the background music" so that our minds can be filled with the other person. As busy parents, we need moments of stillness and quiet to allow our minds to achieve that sense of fuller "presence" with others. This first of all includes other family members whom we might scarcely notice in a given day, even though we pass by them (perhaps too literally) many times each day. We simply fail to connect.

That's why it's so important to take a rest stop from time to time. While resting, we can gather ourselves, and take an account of whether we are truly aware of and present to other family members. To be fully present is a form of discipline. The same is true concerning our awareness of God. We know of the practice of silence in monastic life. Silence is created so that the monks can become more attuned to God's presence in their midst. But gaining a greater awareness of God with us is not just something reserved for monks. We all need this awareness. Our homes are, in a sense, holy places where God dwells. When have we parents last thought about that?

Car or Meal Talk

Talk about how important it is "to pay attention" to each other, parents to children and children to parents.

One-Line Prayer

God the Father, open our eyes, minds, and hearts to your presence with us at home. Amen.