

Sixth Sunday of Easter - A 2023
Acts. 8.5-8,14-17///1Peter 3.15-18///John 14.15-21

→it certainly cannot be denied....that God has a sense of humor or definitely a touch of irony....

→because today's gospel reading is part of the farewell address that Jesus gives to his disciples...his closest friends....

→it is ironic...or perhaps poetic justice that this gospel would be the gospel reading on my last weekend at pastor here at STW...and also as we celebrate Mother's Day

→you know departures of any kind are never easy....when neighbors move away, when you graduate from a school you've attended for many years...when you change jobs and leave co-workers behind and ultimately...when a precious loved one enters eternal life....

→that closure moment, that farewell...that saying good bye is always difficult
---Shakespeare once said, "...parting is such sweet sorrow" and indeed it is...no matter what the circumstances....

PAUSE

→today's gospel reading is part of that farewell address of J. to his disciples...

→he loved them and they loved him...in fact in this very short Gospel reading Jesus uses the word "love" five different times....

→and in doing so Jesus prepares the disciples for the very painful experience of his impending betrayal, crucifixion, and departure from them...which we will celebrate next week on the Feast of the Ascension...

→this was a very painful experience for the disciples.

→in part because everything up to this point, everything that had happened, and everything the disciples had learned depended upon and revolved around Jesus.

→if there was a problem the disciples could not handle they took it to Jesus

→if there was a question about God or about life, they took it to Jesus

→if they needed courage, or wisdom, or strength, or patience, they went to Jesus

→and now....J. is trying to prepare the disciple for his departure, his death...his return to heaven

and he does so by telling the disciples...and you and me.....that the Spirit will come to be with them always

→that God will send HIS SPIRIT, who like Jesus would teach them, and lead them, --- comfort them and strengthen them,

and just LIKE Jesus,WOULD BE WITH THEM ALWAYS.

→[and] this promise.....made to themis the same promise that has been made to you and methat the Holy Spirit will always be a part of us

...never to depart from us.

PAUSE

→[you know] one of the fatal flaws of all human relationships, however beautiful they might be, is that they ultimately cannot last.....

→when you think about it.....separation and loneliness are built into the experience of life....because sooner or later, something pulls our relationships apart

→it may be alienation.....one friend betrays the other, that drives a wedge between them

...or it may be nothing more than a change in residence.....one may move away, and time and space slowly diminishes their togetherness

...or a change in jobs...leaving one position to move on to another....

....and eventually the ultimate separation called when we embrace eternal life.

→some of these separations can be overcome, betrayals can be forgiven, distances can be crossed, but when death is the cause of separation, all options are closed

...and this is the situation the disciples face today

→they experienced...Jesus dying on the cross and then rising from the grave, and now he would soon be returning to heaven...leaving them behind

→and as you might expect, they had feelings of emptiness and despair.....sorrow and frustration

→not unlike the same feelings we have when we experience that same kind of loss and separation...

→...but then, Jesus...in his love for his disciples...and all of us...speaks of and provides the Holy Spirit to take care of them

→[and]...that same Spirit has been given to you and me as well.

PAUSE

→I believe that one of most common crisis' of faith today is that many people don't feel or think as if God is part of their life...

→they don't feel any love or the presence of the Spirit...

[and sadly]....they live as if God has abandoned them or they have abandoned God....

→the occurrence of a disease or illness....the loss of a job....the alienation of a love one....the sting of family problems...the pressures of career and family....are just a few ways that many might feel as if God has abandoned them....

→or more often may cause them to abandon God.

→how many family members or close friends do we all have or know.....that have stopped living and practicing their faith these days...

→simply because an unexpected hardship or difficulty...or in some instances because of their own selfishness or self-centeredness....

→Yet....what J. is tells us today...what our baptism gives us...what our faith inspires us to.... is the understanding...the realization....that the H.S. is with us always

→it's a part of who we are....

→the Spirit is what helps us, urges us, and makes us do and live life according to the Gospel message...

→and **THIS** presence of the Holy Spirit...among us and in our lives is not something we can or should ignore but rather it is something we must embrace and come alive every day of our life here on earth...

→and we make the Spirit come alive by living our faith,

--By embracing the Gospel message

--By spreading the good news to each other in our words and deeds.

--and by showing others the love and grace and compassion of Jesus Christ.

→the state of Missouri is known as the "SHOW ME" state

→Today J tells his disciples and you and me....that we need to "SHOW ONE ANOTHER" the SPIRIT of God in our lives by sharing, living and giving that Spirit to each other here and now....

→in the end Missouri may called the "Show ME" state,

But the Christian life is indeed the "SHOW ME" faith

→simply put....we are to.... show one another the SPIRIT at work in our lives

→or to put it in the words of Christ...."if you love me, show me!"