

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson
15th May 2022 - 5th Sunday of Easter

Readings (Year C): 1st: Acts 14:21-27. 43-52. Psalm: 144. 2nd: Apocalypse 21:1-5. Gospel: John 13:31-35.

Where is the Risen Jesus to be met?

The Liturgy each Sunday in Eastertide directs our thoughts to the various situations where the Lord is present and active in our midst. Over the past weeks we have reflected on his presence in the church's mission of forgiveness, in the faith of those who do not see yet believe, in the universal mission of the church, in the breaking of bread, in the pastoral responsibility of Peter, in the sacraments, and in the voice of the Lord as the shepherd whom we follow.

The answer today is that the Lord is to be found in the community where people love one another with his love.

Judas left the table fellowship of those who shared in the breaking of bread with Jesus. St John expresses the awfulness of his decision by saying that night had fallen. Judas, leaving the Light of the world, was opting for darkness. That night indicated the beginning of the process which would culminate in the death of Jesus.

But Jesus entered the darkness of death only to conquer it. So, the departure of Judas really marked the beginning of the return of Jesus to glory. Sadness would overwhelm the hearts of the disciples when they began to realise that Jesus would no longer be present physically with them. He consoles them with the encouraging message of a new and greater mode of presence in the times after his resurrection.

At his return to the Father's glory, elsewhere called his lifting up, he will draw all people to himself. Thrice lifted: On the cross: from the grave: on the mount of Ascension. In the gospel Jesus promises a higher level of life. This new life will be governed by a new commandment, 'Love one another, just as I have loved you, you must love one another.'

In what sense is this a new commandment? After all the command to love one's neighbour is clearly taught in the Old Testament? What is new in the words of Jesus is the standard of love... 'as I have loved you.'... a love that gives unto death, a love that excludes nobody.

The command to love is without limit. Like the love of Jesus himself (just as I have loved you) is to include everyone even Judas. This was the new commandment he had come to bring and the sign by which the world would recognise his followers. The love of Jesus is not confined to neighbours or close friends. His sort of love includes enemies and those who have been unjust to us. His love is not turned off by the wrongdoing of others. It is a river that refuses to be polluted by the poison of others.

Also new will be the source of love, the Holy Spirit, soon to take up residence in the hearts of the disciples. At Pentecost we sing 'Come down, O love divine.'

As baptised Christian's we are called to be active members of the Body of Christ on earth. The lifestyle of the early Christians gave a powerful witness to the presence of the Lord among them: "See how these Christians love one another."

The challenge for us today is to reflect that: to be the place where the Lord's presence is to be seen and felt: where his disciples follow the example of Jesus' total love. The Church is the beautiful bride of Christ, loved by him and giving birth to love throughout the world in her many children.

Do remember the command is to love, not necessarily to like.
We can't like everyone, but we can love, can want the best for everyone.

Risen Lord Jesus, may your spirit invade our hearts and lift us up beyond our sinful limitations. May your love be the energy of all our activities, so that we might reflect the beauty of your face to the glory of the Father.