

From The Pastor

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me...” These are bold words to those who feel the fear of loss, threatened by sadness, and uncertainty. How are the disciples, and we ourselves, to calm our troubled hearts?

The context is the Last Supper. Jesus knows of his impending death, and the disciples are confronted with its reality. Jesus has told them his fate and its purpose. They do not understand. Not understanding evokes fear and sadness. This usually means a loss of control that calls for trust in something not yet seen or known.

These words are timeless and universal. There are no hearts who have not known the trouble of loss, or the threat of an uncertain future. Yet, these are words of faith meant for the consolation of those who trust in God. These words call us beyond the immediate dimension of the reality that we can see to a dimension of reality that is not yet fully known to us.

“In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places...I am going to prepare a place for you...so that where I am you also may be”. House or home images a place of comfort and security. Home is a place we go to find acceptance and a ready welcome. The Father’s house is that place of love that Jesus prepares for us. The Father is prepared and ready to receive us, yet it is we who must be prepared to realize the dwelling of God within us here and now. We ourselves are the dwelling place of God.

The reading implies a place is being prepared for us sometime in the future. This is only partially true. It anticipates our home is heaven after death. Yet, more to the point is the realization of God dwelling in us here and now. This is the peace that will calm troubled hearts. The troubles of the world will not disappear. Yet, for those who have faith and trust in God, peace can be the quality and nature of our hearts.

I suppose a more direct approach to this question is whether we believe what we say we believe about God and Jesus. We do not know God in God’s fullness. We do not believe in God or in Jesus because we understand. Even if we had perfect understanding we would still seek an inner peace. Peace comes in trust. “Have faith in God and faith in me”. This is the invitation.

Essential to our Christian faith is to know and see God in Jesus. “If you know me you will also know my Father”. Jesus is the physical image of the divine God. Jesus is the agent and mediator of God’s presence and love for the world. To see Jesus, to know Jesus, is to know and see God. This is the less visible dimension of faith. We trust that the words and actions of Jesus are the words and actions of God on our behalf, for our peace and security.

“The Father who dwells in me is doing his work”. Through Jesus, God is having his way with the world. Jesus does nothing on his own, only what he sees the Father doing. Those with faith, who see the action of God in Jesus, will find peace in their hearts. We are not alone in our troubles. Jesus is with us to secure our hearts in the presence of the Father’s love. In the material dimension of our lives, agitation and discouragement will remain. It is the way of the world. In the spiritual dimension, secured by faith and trust in the mystery of God, peace can be known in the midst of trouble and fear. Not only can we know the peace of God in our hearts, we can share in the works of God through Jesus. “Whoever believes in me will do the works I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I go to the Father”.

How can this be? How do I do the works of God and even greater works than those of Jesus? Love is the power and the truth. It was the love of the Father in and for Jesus that allowed Jesus to do the works of the Father. Because of Jesus’ great love for the Father, he joyfully accomplished the work of the Father. It is the same for us. When you deeply love someone and your hearts are mutually one, then your common desire is readily accomplished. In our deep love for Jesus, we will know his way, and accomplish his work. As such, we can all share in doing the works of God in our love and trust in the Lord Jesus.

Take the Lord’s words to heart. They are true and real. In your love for God, and your faith in Jesus, do not let your hearts be troubled. Trials will be many, but calm and peaceful hearts can prevail.

In anticipation of Pentecost, we are seeking persons willing to serve on the Parish Council. Each year, two or three people rotate off the council and need to be replaced. This consultative body discusses vision and direction for the life of the parish. We are looking for people who are interested in building up our faith community with creative vision for the present and for the future. Today’s first reading called for more members to come forward and serve the larger body. This is the nature and identity of the Church. If you can serve in this way, please leave your name with me, the office, or any current member of the Parish Council. Thank you.

Father John Esper.