

## Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 22, 2022

Reflection by Sister Patricia Crowley, OSB

Acts 15:1-2, 22-29; Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23; John 14:23-29.

### I. Introduction

As we approach the feast of the Ascension, we might ask ourselves where was it that Jesus went? Then, we remember that, in spite of the footprint on a rock shown to tourists in Israel, we really don't think that this event happened as described in the gospels. So, what did happen? I must admit that the coming feast and the readings selected for this 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter 2022 bring lots of questions to my mind.

In thinking about these readings, I returned to the words of Rainier Marie Rilke:

In a (his) 1903 letter to his protégé, the 19-year-old cadet and budding poet Franz Xavier Kappus:

*I want to beg you, as much as I can, dear sir, to be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.*

So, I invite you to look at some of the questions you might have. I have many as I experience our world so filled with violence and war and polarization and hatred and fear. Stress and polarity do mark our day and we might take some comfort the acknowledgement that among the early followers of Jesus.....*there arose no little dissension and debate.*

In the midst of the dissension and debate of our own day, satisfying answers may be few and far between our experiences of life these days.

The questions, however, are many. Pausing to listen to the questions in our own hearts might just pry open a window and we might even move a bit toward a new level of awareness about the reality of our human life and the Divine presence in that life.

### II. John's gospel & Easter

We have been reading this “Last Supper Dialogue” or “Farewell Discourse” of John’s gospel, each day for some weeks now. There the author tries to describe the meaning of the passion, death, and resurrection, what we now call “the paschal mystery” and does so in a circuitous poetic style. That gospel, we know, is the last one written, probably had many different authors, and is surely the most highly developed theological gospel writing we have. This gospel raises lots of questions for me (and perhaps for you?).

At the time of its writing, the emerging religion was still a mixture of Judaism and Christianity. This gospel is the expression of the Theology / Christology that had emerged by the end of the first century after Jesus’ death. Scholars (per the JBC) say that it was written to convince Christians that religious belief and practice must be rooted in Jesus. It was also written to counteract the persistent followers of John who still were not sure that Jesus was, indeed, the Messiah.

So, with this in mind, what are some of the questions???

### III. Questions

In our day there are so many levels of awareness across the human race.

- Some say that a brand new spiritual awakening is occurring and now, is only recognized by a few across the globe. Is that really happening?
- Some say the divisions in the Church and in Christianity, especially at this moment in time around the theology and practices shared through Vatican II and now around the issue of abortion, a woman’s right to choose, and the right to life in the womb, this may be the beginning of the end of the Church as we know it and perhaps of Christianity itself. What might that mean?
- Others say we are approaching the end, the last days, a “second coming”? What might that look like?
- Some are overwhelmed by anxiety, hopelessness, and fear. Others are filled with hope. Where am I on that spectrum?
- And then the questions raised in these readings:
  - How will Christ come back to us?
  - How is God present with us?
  - What is the reality of God in our world?
  - Is it a coincidence that we describe this as the Holy Spirit and the native American people of our land call it the Great Spirit?
  - To what do we look forward according to this gospel of John?
  - What is the peace that Jesus promises?

- How can we not be troubled or afraid these days?

Each of those questions could be the focus of a homily or perhaps of a theological treatise. I am not about to do either. I only share here some of the questions that meander through my own prayer and pondering these days.

IV. Looking at today's readings, then, I find that:

- A. In Revelation - which, according to Gabe Moran, my mentor, is the least read and least understood book of the New Testament. So full of imagery that one can get lost in the words and one can end up wondering what does this mean? What is it trying to tell the reader of ancient times and of today when it says *I saw no temple in the city for its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb*. We know Yahweh did not want David to build a temple and that Jesus called himself the temple that would be destroyed and raised up again. Perhaps in the second coming there is no temple?
- B. In the entrance antiphon from Isaiah 48;20 – *God has freed this people*, we ask – freed for what? From what? Perhaps toward a new awareness of the Divine in our world, in our lives?
- C. In the gospel passage, Jesus says: *The Advocate, the Spirit will teach you everything ....and...I will come back to you*. For a long time now, I have been perplexed by the notion of a “second coming” – What does that mean? Could the second coming be about our moving to a deeper awareness of God's (the Spirit's) presence in our world?

V. Conclusion

With Mary Oliver we might say: *I keep looking around me.....One question leads to another.*

Questions can lead to new levels of consciousness. We might, say with her also: *I don't want to end up simply having visited the world.*

Another favorite poet, David Whyte, comments:

*Questions that have no right to go away are those that have to do with the person we are about to become.*

*The beautiful question is one that has the power to shift our thinking, catalyse inner change, and open us to new possibilities aligned with our deepest longings and truth.*

*You just have to keep asking and before you know it, you will find yourself actually shaping a different life.....*

Indeed, our faith can be nurtured by our questions. Let's allow ourselves the freedom to -

*Live the questions now.*