

Easter Sunday 5A. 3.5.26

Love goes both ways. Jesus loves his disciples in order that they may learn to love too – and not only himself but one another and in this they too will come to the Father, the one whose love permeates all things. So love then becomes the medium through which we come to God and, just as well, through which God comes to us. This word “love” isn’t used explicitly in today’s readings from scripture other than in the psalm which in a sense is the hub around which the others revolve – it’s often the psalms which crystallize our faith in emotional terms, or better in terms of the emotions which we are more immediately in touch with

“For the word of the Lord is faithful

and all his works to be trusted.

The Lord loves justice and right

and fills the earth with his love.

The Lord looks on those who revere him;

On those who hope in His love....

The work that Jesus has done among his disciples is the work of drawing them to himself such that they cannot envisage life without him. They are puzzled at what comes next. Well, what comes next is their love for one another – this will be the greater work they will perform as they discover that in their attempt to love one another the Holy Spirit comes to their aid, the Spirit who binds Father and Son together, and brings us too into the orbit of their love. We see this Spirit at work when the disciples become aware that all is not as it should be in their care for one another; the widows of the Greek speaking Jewish Christians are being neglected. They decide on the very practical measure of appointing seven men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom to undertake this task, this service of others, and this step of love immediately attracts others. This type of service will later become formalised in the appointment of deacons to free up the elders, the priests, in their ministry of evangelisation but it is essentially a work of trusting others in the ministry of love, of allowing the Spirit to do its work of love in others.

This was brought home to me yesterday when we ran a day exploring Bird Song – the speakers and the rest of us were able to concentrate on their own tasks or of simply listening, because there was a wonderful group of female deacons taking care of all the logistics and, dare I say, enjoying themselves in the process – through their ministry to others they were discovering and building a community, however transient and informal, for themselves. The sunshine helped as did the birdsong, drawing us all into a sense that something greater, something more was at work than our own individual efforts. We touched on the bonding that takes place through song, how the young need to hear the adult song in order to learn how to belong and to develop a language,

a dialect even, which makes them part of something greater, of the ability of female birds to be as significant in this process as the males, as even setting the pace and forcing the males to adopt the latest lyrics if they are to remain attractive, of the possibility that male and female birds form bonds through singing duets together and that birdsong may even draw us into caring for the birds and their habitat as a “ deliberate” strategy , nicely summed up in a quote from the Czech writer Vaclav Havel

.”by perceiving ourselves as part of the river

we accept our responsibility for the river as a whole” (p69 Plough Summer 2021)

By perceiving ourselves as part of the Way we become the Way for others – “a people set apart to sing the praises of God.”

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