

6 Easter A 2020 SML
JN 14:15-21

The scene for this morning's gospel was the Last Supper. Only in John's gospel does Our Blessed Lord teach the Apostles at the Last Supper, for four chapters, knowing that first Holy Thursday night would be His last night on earth before His crucifixion. And there was so much He wanted to teach, knowing that in a few hours all would break loose in the garden, and His Passion would begin.

For four chapters Our Blessed Lord spoke about what was near and dear to His Sacred Heart. He spoke about everything His disciples needed to know to survive His impending death, until the Holy Spirit descends on Pentecost:

- ✓ Jesus taught them a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.
- ✓ He taught them He would return to His heavenly Father.
- ✓ He taught them He and the Father were one.
- ✓ He taught them of the special bond between His disciples and Him. He taught them, "I am the vine. You are the branches."
- ✓ He taught them the world would hate them.
- ✓ He prayed to the Father right in front of them.

- ✓ And five times He taught them about how the Holy Spirit will come to be with them, to guide them, to keep them united, to help them and remind them of all that He did and taught.

Part of the reason why Our Blessed Lord taught at length about the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Apostles, in the life of the Church, is loneliness. Our Blessed Lord told the Apostles they would not be alone after He died, but after He ascended into heaven, they would feel alone. They would be lonely. They would feel desolate. They would feel God forsaken. They would feel like orphans.

This Our Blessed Lord knew, because a host of biblical greats experienced loneliness:

- ✓ Noah walked by faith, but no doubt suffered the loneliness of rejection by his peers.
- ✓ Abraham was asked by God to kill his only son Isaac. What a burden, a lonely time, a great trial, and heart-ache: to go, do and obey!
- ✓ Moses was a man set apart; while working in Pharaoh's court he must have felt very lonely, by himself; not understood by either his own or the Egyptians.
- ✓ Job stands out especially as the extreme example of a lonely man.

And despite the intimacy of the Last Supper, when John the Beloved leaned against the chest of Our Blessed Lord,

when the words of Our Blessed Lord flowed so freely for four chapters at that Holy Thursday table, every Disciple took off when the guards arrived at Gethsemane. He knew what loneliness was. As Our Blessed Lord was holed up in the prison below Pilate's palace, His prayer could have been any one of the many psalms of David, a great king who knew loneliness as well:

- ✓ Psalm 69:20: I looked for sympathy, but there was none; for comforters but found none.
- ✓ Psalm 102:3 Hide not your face from me in the day of my distress.
- ✓ Psalm 142:4-5: I look to the right and see, but there is no one who pays me heed. I have lost all means of escape; there is no one who cared for my life.

to name just a few. In the four trials before the Jewish and Roman judges later that night and Good Friday morning, there was not one single Apostle who spoke a word in His defense, because they forsook Him and fled.

While loneliness can be a part of life, Our Blessed Lord prefaced His teaching with "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." He prefaced His teaching because there is a loneliness that can be avoided, as nothing can isolate us from

God, nothing can isolate us from others, more than sin. Sin isolates. Sin isolates more than a pandemic every could. And I know some of you feel alone. I was powerwalking through Medford Lakes this past week and a parishioner was on her deck over the lake. And she told me she is just so alone. Many I am sure feel the same way.

You will recall the quick and easy confessions Father Roy and I heard after the Masses on Ash Wednesday. Quick and as joyful as going to Holy Communion, one might say. They were quick because you said two words for how long it had been since your last confession, and one word for every sin. Some I heard hadn't been to confession for 10, 20, 30, 40 years. Nothing isolates more than sin.

On Holy Thursday night, had there been no pandemic, we would have washed feet. The Washing of the Disciples' Feet was a metaphorical teaching on confession. Father Roy and I had planned quick and easy confessions for Holy Thursday night.

If you feel isolated because of sin, now is the time. A perfect act of contrition during the pandemic is just as good as confession said Our Holy Father Francis. Nothing but God's

grace. You will be in the state of grace once again. Confession once the pandemic lifts wouldn't hurt but I'll leave that to you.

There's two choices. You can let that sin continue to fester in you, and you can try to rationalize what you did, "That God understands," or "If they didn't do A, then I wouldn't have done B," or "It all started when he hit me back . . ." or you can do say a perfect act of contrition with me right now:

O My God . . .

While nothing is more isolating than sin, even more than a pandemic, nothing is more welcoming, more soothing, more comforting than God's grace. I guarantee you will feel better. Living in the state of grace, you're never lonely. You're never alone.