

May 17, 2020

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; 1 Peter 3:15-18; Jn 14:1-12

Loneliness and feelings of abandonment afflict so many people in the world. We are all searching for love, all wanting to be part of something greater - all wanting to be seen as worthy and respected. There are a lot of things we can do to feel loved, satisfied, and accepted, but some of these do not take into account a great reality. Love is a two way street. We have to contribute to our relationships of love if we expect to receive anything meaningful in return. Jesus says in the Gospel: *If you love me, you will keep my commandments*, and then he promises: *I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you*. What does this mean, and how is this an answer to the loneliness in our lives ... and in the world?

We heard in the second reading: *Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts*. We have to enthrone Christ as Lord in the depths of our hearts. Not just with words, but with a real heartfelt movement towards Lord in love. To enthrone Jesus as Lord of our hearts means to take up an inner attitude to follow Jesus - to serve the Lord with devotion, obedience, and respect. To enter into a relationship of love in which we are willing to contribute. As with anyone we love, we would want to try to give them what they ask as best as we can. This expression of love on our part to the Lord opens us to the Lord who knows better than we do what we need to satisfy us. The more we work to satisfy what Jesus asks, the more we open our hearts to Him so that He can satisfy us. By sincere love and devotion to the Lord we remain united to Him by doing the things that bring us closer to Him, and avoiding the things that cause a division between us and God. Since God will not force what we need upon us, we have to open ourselves to receive what we really need from God - even if we don't actually know what that is. If we enter in faith into this relationship of love with the Lord we will experience a hope and a peaceful satisfaction that he wants us to share with others. We heard today: *Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope*. Those of us who are experiencing the love and peace of the Lord may keep it secret. Perhaps we are afraid that people will think we are religious kooks, perhaps we wonder if expressing it to others will bring us to the point of contributing more to the relationship, and we may be holding back.

When we really love someone we care less and less what other people think of that relationship. We focus on the other and remain faithful and loyal even if other people don't

understand what we see in the person, even if others don't know what we are getting out of the relationship. Jesus provides for those who follow his commandments in love by sending us the Holy Spirit. We heard in the Gospel: *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows him. But you know him, because he remains with you, and will be in you.* This presence of the Spirit in us that we received in Baptism and then more powerfully in Confirmation is the answer to the loneliness and abandonment we personally feel.

Some may be saying: "I really don't feel that Holy Spirit I received at Baptism and Confirmation." You may also say: "I don't feel the presence or satisfaction of the Lord consistently." Sometimes it is because we are not consistently open to God's love, or we have unrealistic expectations of what we should receive - no relationship is a constant stream of good feelings all the time - even when you are in love. What makes the difference in the relationship is the consistent effort to deepen the relationship and stick by the other in the less satisfying times. In the first reading we heard that in response to the Samaritans accepting the word of God, in response to them pledging their love and devotion to God, in response to their giving of themselves to the Lord and others by following his commandments, *they ... receive[d] the Holy Spirit.* Baptism was for them and us the first step - but something deeper was needed of them to experience the Spirit. They entered into a loving relationship with the Lord and were willing to give and follow in love - and then they received the Holy Spirit in a fuller and more powerful way.

Jesus has been saying in recent weeks things like: when you see me you have seen the Father, the father is in me and I am in him, the Father and I are one. Look what he says here: *I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you.* The unity with Jesus that we achieve by Baptism and following God's commands (which are only there to help us stay in union with that God), the unity we deepen by prayer receiving him in the Eucharist, and the unlocking of the Spirit within us through consistent openness of heart helps us realize that God in Jesus is within us. This should ease our loneliness a bit ... and as we help others to see the same thing in themselves - we ease the loneliness and alienation of a world filled with loneliness and alienation. Pray today for that courage to contribute to your relationship with Jesus to the fullest - then as we receive the benefits of that relationship we will understand the words of Jesus today: *I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.*