

May 19, 2019

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Beth Marshall

Teacher – Chaminade Julianne Catholic High School

This week's readings take us through an interesting progression.

In Acts, we follow Paul and Barnabas as they ramp up their work for the kingdom of God; Revelations tells us, "God himself will always be with them as their God", and then in the Gospel Jesus reveals, "I will be with you only a little while longer." How to reconcile these messages: work for a kingdom to build a church, assurance of an always present God, and a message of farewell?

We may find ourselves asking how we are to, like Paul and Barnabas, persevere in our own lives, proclaiming the kingdom of God, praying, fasting, striving to do God's will, believing that He is always with us, while at the same time acknowledging Jesus' message that he "will be with [us]" only a little while longer?

How can it be that God will always be with us when Jesus, God made flesh, leaves? How did the disciples continue Christ's work and build the kingdom of God ?

The answer lies in one of the most famous passages of all time from the Bible, "love one another."



It is often easy to lose sight of this simple command--which is not simple in the face of our daily struggles. The verbs in the verses from Acts reveal the energy-sapping reality of Paul and Barnabas as they proclaim, make, strengthen, exhort, appoint, commend, travel, sail, call, and report--words that reveal creative leadership, geographic movement, and accountability, and which make them more relatable to us all. Where did they find the strength? How do we find the energy to keep going ourselves?

Again, the answer is in love. And like the disciples, through love for God, for one another, for ourselves as Children of God, we make present the kingdom of God. In the tradition of the Marianists, this love is encountered through a special devotion to Mary. In 1822 Father Chaminade reasoned, "How is it possible to find Jesus without Mary, since Jesus did not come to us except with Mary's consent!... We reach Jesus only through Mary, just as Jesus came to us only through her." How beautiful, then, to recognize the power of this love in the month of May and to crown Mary daily in our hearts through obeying her son with joy!

"Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley captures the legacy of a great Egyptian pharaoh in the lines,

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Though there was love in the Egyptian civilization, it clearly was not the love meant by Jesus when he exhorts us to love one another. The kingdoms of mankind will continue to come and go. The kingdom of God, however, is eternal, and to love as Jesus commands makes us part of a kingdom that has endured, and will continue to endure, forever.