

Sixth Sunday in Easter – John 14:15-21

Father Peter Edmonds, a Jesuit I knew who taught Scripture in Kenya, writes,

“Last Sunday’s gospel began and ended with a call to **believe** in Jesus. Today’s reading begins and ends by insisting on the need to **love** Jesus. This is a key word from the beginning of the Last Supper. The one who loves, is the one who keeps the commandments. The only commandment in John is the command to love one another. In return for this love, the love of the Father is promised, and will not only have their home in glory but will come and set up their home within the believer. This is the real answer to the question which Andrew and the unknown disciples asked Jesus at the beginning of the gospel.

To refresh your memory, as John the Baptist watched Jesus walk by and said, “Behold the Lamb of God.” The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus, and he turned and saw them following him and said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Teacher, where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” After this episode, Andrew brought his brother Simon Peter to Jesus and said, “We have found the Messiah.” And Jesus found Philip and told him to “Follow me.” And Philip brought his friend Nathaniel to meet Jesus. In John’s gospel these four are the top apostles.

You would think that after spending several years with Jesus throughout his travels in Judaea, they would get to know the Christ quite well and believe that he is the Messiah as Andrew acclaimed. Their love of Jesus doesn’t always guarantee that they will come to realize who Jesus really is, especially the Son of God. Jesus promises that the Father and Jesus will love those in return who keep his commandments and to reveal himself to them.

We come here every Sunday and Jesus reveals himself to us in at least three ways: in our Faith Community where two or three are gathered, in the Word of God where Jesus speaks to us through the Gospel, and in the Breaking of the Bread and Sharing of the Cup.

If you have watched any of the episodes of the Chosen, it is interesting to note the women in the background, including Mary, the mother of Jesus, especially at gatherings and meals where food is being prepared and served. There is always that core group that serves food and clean up. The men, of course, are chatting with Jesus. Only in John we find the rare scene where Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, actually sitting at his feet listening.

In our own parish we also have that core group of those women and men who come each Saturday and clean the Church, and on Sunday take turns to help with the readings at the liturgy, serve at the altar, and distribute the bread and wine.

My mother was always active in church, especially cleaning, and after Vatican II she was just as active in reading and serving. Eventually she went through the Pastoral Program in Cincinnati when Archbishop Bernardine started the Pastoral Program. She went through the program herself with Mrs. Stang, the sister-in-law of Dorothy Stang, and continued to serve at Our Lady of Mercy. Several times they had her lead a communion service when there was no priest available, which seemed quite natural to the parish at that time.

It seems like the clock is turning back, where women are chased out of the sanctuary and even forbidden to clean the sacred vessels that were used at mass. I am sure Mary, the mother of Jesus, did the dishes after their meals together. The irony is that Mary is the sacred vessel that held the body of Christ for nine months until she gave birth. Where were the men then? And especially after to help his birth to help change Jesus `diapers?

One of our Marianist artists was commissioned to sculpt a statue of Mary for a parish. He made it in such a way that the statue of Mary, who refreshingly is in her later fifties and seated, was to be placed right there, in the midst of the community facing the altar. I am sure at that age Mary was still washing dishes and cleaning up their worshiping space, and maybe even given at least the first reading and maybe even helping to distribute the wine. If not, at least making sure they didn't run out, again.