Seventh Sunday of Easter May 13, 2018

All Saints’ Church Year B

Acts 1:15-17;21-26 1 John 5:9-13

Psalm 1 John 17:6-19

Thank you Jesus for all the ways you easter in us. AMEN

We are near the end of our Easter season of 50 days. We are in a waiting period.

Just this past Thursday was the Feast of the Ascension, the day in which Jesus ascends into the heavens, forever. One of my favorite paintings of the event is by Salvador Dali, which he painted in 1958. In this painting, we see the soles of Jesus’ feet as we look up, with the nucleus of an atom, as the background, which for Dali was the unifying spirit of the Christ…. The atom, like the symmetry of a sunflower, as the Christ- shows its power, the source of life, of energy, of pulling us all together in this marvelous creation we call humanity and the universe.

We are caught waiting in these ten days for Pentecost, which is next Sunday. The Feast of Pentecost is the celebration of the Birth of the Church. A Happy Birthday party, where we give thanks for the gift of the Holy Spirit, which unites us, which makes us a community defined by God’s love for us.

Grounded in this love, we are empowered to love, and to make a difference in our world, to light up the world with the tongues of Christ’s fire of Love.

We are waiting; it’s like Advent on Steroids…. We ***were waiting*** for the birth of Christ, and now we ***are waiting*** for the birth of the Church.

While we wait, our readings this morning reminds us of the ***great fragmentation*** of the world, and the potential for us, always, to break off into disaster, into pain, into suffering, into betrayal… for evil ways to dominate. And yet, we need to hear these voices of fragmentation- not deny. As my favorite Italian philosopher, Theodor Odorno wrote, “the need to let suffering speak is a condition for all truth.”

There is much suffering in these readings. And yet if we do not let these voices of suffering speak, we cannot be exposed to the truth and live within it.

In our first reading, The Acts of the Apostles, Judas, the one “who became the guide for those who arrested Jesus” needs to be replaced. A sad time, because it’s not only recognizing Judas’ weakness and betrayal, *but all of the disciples’ failings* as well.

They all blew it! And they know it- they can only ask for forgiveness, pick themselves up again, and hopefully rely on the Lord who knows their hearts so they can move on to find meaning/purpose. It’s what we mean by redemption.

In the First Letter of John, we are introduced to the Johannine community, and they are in a fight for their lives. They are in a critical debate: Will you base your community on the teachings of Christ and trust in Love as your abiding principle ***for all, for everything?***

Or will you love in a limited way…. Love is fine, of course, but there are limits- love, but stay safe within your community, building up walls and security and protection. Those on this guarded side of loving have a good argument- to love unconditionally, the world??? Are you kidding!!!Is very naïve!! You will get crushed. Protect yourself, don’t be vulnerable, watch out for #1, define who belongs to you and stay safe within those confines.

Yet, the Johannine community are radical in their commitment to Love, because Love is God, God is Love, and Jesus lived within Love. Love, with no limits, Jesus was willing to die for Love. Love is not a sentiment or a feeling. It’s a force, as real as the nucleus of an atom, and is the basis for the ways the world unifies. And so if you are going to live in truth, you are going to live in this love….. it will bring suffering, but you will be living within Truth.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the great French philosopher and paleontologist and geologist is very clear: “Love is the affinity which links and draws together the elements of the world. Love, in fact, is the agent of universal synthesis.”

In other words, driven by the forces of love, the fragments of the world seek each other so that the world may come into being. Love is a force as real as gravity.

Very cool idea. The Johannine community is fighting for their lives to live within the reality of Love, not just the feeling of love.

If you want to see this theology come to life in an action packed movie, go see *Black Panther,* which is powerful expression of the risks we need to take to love the stranger, the one beyond our tribe, the one in trouble, and not just protect ourselves and our privilege, because that insular approach will eventually be our death-nail, and we will become as the psalmist reminds us, “like chaff which the wind blows away.”

And then in our last reading, in the gospel, we see Jesus giving his last talk with his disciples, his going-away sermon. He is leaving; his deep love for them is going to get him killed. Jesus is grieving. Jesus is praying for his beloved ones. “I’ve done my best, I’ve shown you deep love, I’m leaving you, and I am praying for you that God may keep you safe.”

Jesus feels so much like a parent here. Your 16-year old gets in the car, with his new license and drives off without you. “Oh, please keep him safe, dear Lord.” My own daughter has just accepted a job in Jordan and will be packing her bags, following her dream, and I can only say, “O Lord, please keep her safe.”

The decision to be a parent is the decision ***to let your heart walk around outside your body for the rest of your life***. Loving deeply brings with it the possibility of grieving deeply. Jesus knows this, as the Great Parent of all of us.

Tyler and Kira, you know this, as well, in ways you never understood until Ada came into your life.

And in the midst of this fragmented world, we are going to take the bold step and believe in Love and baptize Ada and pray for her with so many beautiful words: “Open her heart to your grace and truth…. Help her to strive for justice and peace among ***all people***… Teach her to love others in the power of the spirit…. Give her an inquiring and discerning heart.”

Big words of freedom, of meaning, of intensity, of finding her voice, her heart, her passion. And like Jesus, we can only say… “We are loving you as deeply as we can; yet you are in God’s hands”… because, of course, and we forget, but the whole world is in God’s hands. Our lives and our children’s lives belong to God, and in this reality, we can say, as God said to his beloved Son, “You are my beloved daughter, my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased.”

This is the most important thing we have to say to our children. Not always easy, because we want to protect our children and all our loved ones, and control love….. by finding the best school, or the best job, or the best spouse, or the best direction, or the best success, or the best cure, or the best achievement and glory, and yet that’s not really our role. In a world where it seems, increasingly so, ***that everything is allowed, yet nothing is forgiven***, we need to be the God-reminder, the Christ-reminder, that “we love you just because, just because of you being you.”

This “radical reminder” got Jesus into lots of trouble. He often told us that faith doesn’t always look like we think it does.

Love Incarnate. Love that has no limits. Something completely out of our orbit, yet it is alive, and is the very force that unites us, down to our very cell.

That’s what we are waiting for, as we wait for Pentecost, as we wait for the Birth of the Church.

In the midst of all the fragmentation of the world, in suffering, in the possibility of evil acts having their way, we make our stance: We believe in Love, and that we can become that Love that unites, that breaks down barriers that can set us free.

Or as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin states, “Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides, and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.”

AMEN.