

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, May 5th 2016

During these liturgical days after Easter, we have been walking slowly and meditatively through John's account of the graduation talk Jesus gave to His disciples the night of His arrest. The Gospel for today's Eucharistic celebration is kind of a little Hide and Seek, or "Now you see it and now you don't." It can sound like Jesus' playing with the minds and imaginations of His disciples.

Apparently the writer of this Gospel is aware of communal-questioning during the times of Jesus ministry and especially after His death and even after His Resurrection.

Two conflictual ideas catch the minds and hearts of His listeners. "A little while" and "A little while after," forces the disciples to murmur among themselves. Then they hear that they are going to lament, but then rejoice. The writer sets up a question-and-answer tension whose resolution will come clearer in the days and weeks to come. The big idea here is that the faith of the disciples is going to be challenged as they experience the passion of Jesus. They have very good questions and want to know. Doesn't everybody?

The "world" will rejoice for a "little while" as the disciples are dejected and ashamed. The disciples will then regain their joy, but at the time of their hearing these words, they want to know now! And they want to know definitely! Jesus is not playing a word-game with His little community. He is preparing them to face gracefully their human desire for clarity and comfort. They hear about how everything is going to turn out for their best interests, but that seems more a promise than an absolutely confirmed prediction.

The disciples are asking about just how long is a 'little while' and how long will there be sorrows and lamenting. They have been with Jesus all these years and they still have such good questions. The good question is about whether or not they are trusting when they have good questions. The "perfect" disciple would not have murmured, questioned. Ah, well is that actually accurate? The "perfect" disciple was then and is now a real person, not a real angel or robot. The "perfect" disciples were there that night and into the next days. They heard, they pondered, they reflected and so experienced doubts and fears about these "little whiles" and little "lamentings". There must be doubts and fears if faith is to be real.

Next week, here at Creighton University, a wonderful collection of women and men will graduate and move on. I have been privileged to accompany many of them this past year. Check this out! They have a good education, many options, confidence in their gifts, and they are terrified. Most have a deep faith in a loving God Who has blessed them, but they are terrified! They have asked each other and have asked their faculty and advisers; they have consulted with our Vocational Opportunity Department and even with me, about the answers for which the disciples of Jesus are asking this night

of their graduation. I think those blue gowns they will wear are just meant to cover their knocking-knees.

There are no answers to the questions about our futures. Everything seems a “little while” within which we want clarity and the security of answers. Even when answers arrive, they lead only to further future knockings. The “little while” for these disciples ended in the “rejoicing” of the Resurrection. This in turn resulted in their personal invitations to go beyond the paralysis of fears to the freedom of faith. They never did and we will never, have the security which would make faith a farce.

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