**Easter V Year A 2020**

Alleluia, Christ is risen

**Collect**

Generous God, whose way is love, whose truth is searching, whose life is freely given in Jesus Christ our Lord: as you have opened for us the many rooms, so may we make a place for the rejected and unloved, and share the work of peace; through Jesus Christ, the image of God. Amen.

**The Gospel**

**John 14:1-14**

Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

**The Homily**

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I hope I’m learning faster, better, in this strange time… maybe I’m paying closer attention because of the collective trauma… maybe it’s a choice to be open to life’s poignancy… a choice to learn from it…. I don’t feel so much like I’m learning in these days of pandemic… but I do feel more opened up… vulnerable to possibility; receptive to revelation. I am learning, if nothing else, how to wait.

But there are some things I now know… I know that the future will never be what we think it will be… never…. If you think the future will unfold according to plan… you will be disappointed! We’ve learned that, right? And second…. A second thing I know is that what we fear most in our short time on this earth is not death… Death is not the thing that keeps us awake at night… the fear of death is not the thing that casts Hamlet into his dark night of the soul…. No, what we fear most is life itself…What we fear most is being truly alive… and being truly alive means that we must be open and honest to life’s undulations and ambiguity… open and honest to life’s improbable unfolding… to its danger… to its suffering… open to risk…. open to surprise…. Life is a process of improvisation… the future a mere contingency to what we improvise in each present moment… and by what is improvised upon us…. W. H. Auden calls this the way of “unlikeness”… a way upon which we experience phenomena never seen before… reality undreamed, reality unfolding… We are forever on this journey called life entering new lands, new oceans…. Uncharted frontier… dangerous, beautiful… a journey upon which we must suffer, and a journey in which we find joy… there is not one without the other, as hard as we might pretend that things are otherwise.

There is a prayer I wrote for myself many years ago, around the time my father died. The prayer is simple; one line. It is this: O God, grant me the courage to be. It wasn’t original with me. I got it from the theologian Paul Tillich. He argued that what faith engenders in the persistent pilgrim is “the courage to be”. In times of crisis this prayer never fails to arrive from memory into the present moment. Over the years the prayer has meant different things to me, but now its meaning seems so very simple: “trust the process.” …. Trust, of course, is a willful practice…To trust is to be open, and vulnerable, and honest… one cannot trust if one is not honest… easier said than done, right? And then to see life as process… life being about the means of living, not the ends, which is to say again that whatever is next will be utterly unlike what we expect…. In short, I’m saying to trust the means… and that means to put all our energy in the present moment… give ourselves fully to the matter at hand… Don’t worry about the future… live now… open, vulnerable, honest…. Withhold from no one… keep no secrets… give yourself over to the here and now… trust the process.

This is what the Gospels I think are after, the writers and editors of John’s gospel no exception… They are speculating as to the age-old question from Plato to Kierkegaard, to the present day… of “How then shall we live”… What can we know, and what shall we do? For John Jesus is what we know and Jesus is how we live… what we do…. This passage that we just read, we hear mostly at funerals… as if this passage has something to do with the afterlife… as if the writer is pointing toward some utopian, perfected future… but we can’t know the future. It is an illusion… this passage is about how we live now, in the present moment… the only reality we know… and the writer proposes that we find our identity in how we live… In other words we know according to what we do… and to know ourselves is to know God… and in such knowledge is unbounded freedom… the courage to be…. So John’s premise is this: To know Jesus is to know God… and the way to know Jesus is to live the way of Jesus…the way of Jesus being feeding, healing, befriending, forgiving, welcoming… washing the feet of our sister, our brother… open, honest, vulnerable. This is the way to life as God imagines it.

We are sent as the Christ is sent to make many dwelling places for our brother and sister sojourners…. The dwelling places of which Jesus speaks are not up there in the heavenly future… they are here and now on earth… and it is for us as the raised body of Christ to make dignified space for our brother, for our sister… to attend to the well-being of our fellow travelers.

John is speaking to us of the secret of life itself…actually, no secret… not rocket science, he tells them…. It’s something we know and have known… something we certainly should know… that to live open, vulnerable and honest, serving the well-being of our neighbor is to live in God… and to live in God is to know perfect freedom… not a pie in the sky promise attainable only in the hereafter… but freedom to live into our full humanity without fear, and suffering notwithstanding, to live into joy. Why wait for eternal life in the future, when it is for the choosing now?

These are words of wisdom for our journey…. Trust with courage the process… God is process, alive and in motion among us…. Trust the Journey… trust the day trip…. Give yourself to it… call on the improvising spirit within… pay attention on the way… there are signs… you will meet rare circumstance, and there will be much to discover…. Invite into your life those whom you meet on the road… make room for them… befriend unguardedly…. Improvise goodness on the way.

Half the battle it seems to me is that this gift we call life is something for which to be profoundly grateful. What an astounding privilege to be invited into such a journey… if only for a day… a day of miracles and wonders… It is a profound privilege to live in the great improvisation, which is God’s very imaginative life… despite the troubles, and the rigors of such a journey… I know that I am so grateful for this day’s journey… grateful for those I meet along the way… grateful for the freedom God offers us, and the freedom we are called to engender in our world. Jesus’ prayer for us is that our joy be complete, and that prayer, that promise, brothers and sisters, is not for the future but for today… for now…. How astounding is that?

**The Prayers**

**The Blessing**

May we who have been touched by the Word made flesh be his body for the world, his hands to bring blessing, his senses to glory, in the promise of creation restored; and the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you this day and always. Amen.