

Sixth Sunday of Easter: Indwelling

"Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our dwelling in him."

This instruction from today's Gospel builds on the statement of faith found in the Prologue of that same Gospel, the *Gospel of John*. The central message of the Prologue is the Incarnation of the Lord: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The exact translation is that "He pitched his tent among us." In our modern terms, this would be, "He moved into the house down the street." Today's Gospel takes the dwelling of God on earth to a deeper level. He is not just among us. He is within us. He is within us as a worshipping Body, the Church. He is within us in the union of all believers into the Mystical Body of Christ. He is all this and much more. He is within each of us.

We can speak to God all day, not addressing ourselves to some being "out there somewhere," not even addressing ourselves to "the man upstairs." We can speak to God within us.

The founders of our country were mostly Deists. They believed in a God who is removed from the ordinary events of human life. For them God was only involved if there was something significant going on. They saw the Revolution as a significant event and called upon God to help free the colonies from the British and form a new country where people would govern themselves. That's why they put "In God We Trust," on our currency. But Washington, Franklin, Hamilton and Jefferson, among others, did not believe that God would be concerned with the affairs of their personal lives. Perhaps that might explain the lack of morality displayed by many of the men who so piously made "In God we trust," the motto of our country. Prayer for them was only a matter of a community worship, a formal event. They did not view prayer as a daily communication with God. They professed to be Christian, but they did not recognize Christ in their daily lives.

The *Gospel of John* tells us that Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the One who cares for each of us. He dwells within us. He nurtures us with the Eucharist. God is not *out there*. He is *in here*.

Wherever we go, we bring God with us. Whatever we do, we do together with Him. He is not just "the man upstairs." He is "the presence within." There are many ways that God is present in the world. Some ways that God is present are deeper, more intense than other ways. The deepest, most intense presence of the Lord is in the Eucharist, the Blessed Sacrament. We need this presence. We take this presence within us, at least once a week. We pray before this presence when we enter into Eucharistic adoration. We offer this presence as the sacrificial victim to the Father every time we celebrate Mass. We need this presence to sustain the other ways that the Lord is present in our lives.

The second deepest, intense presence of God in the world is in the Word of God, Sacred Scripture. The bible is not just a book, even though the word bible means book. Deep within the words of the Bible is the Word of God. That is why we read the Bible and are changed and molded by the words on which we meditate. *Hebrews 4:12* tells us, *"The word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces the soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart."* The Presence of God in the Sacrament, the Sacraments, and in the Word are the great gifts of Easter. These and so many other ways we experience God are Grace, his Amazing Grace. All this is good, very good. The Gateway to this increasing grace in our lives is itself the very presence of God. This presence allows us to receive the most intense ways that God is present. *"Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our dwelling in him."*

We can easily forget about this presence. Our lives are busy. Even when we have days off, or a few hours to ourselves, we are busy. That is why we need to schedule daily prayer. We need to talk to God throughout the day, true, but if we don't schedule a time for daily prayers, we will get so involved in our day that we'll forget to talk to the one who is within us. Perhaps we can pray when we are washing up in the morning. For parents, there should always be prayer time when you put your children to sleep for the night, first with them and then together, mother and father, for them. For others prayer time might work after the dishes and before sitting before the screen, TV or computer.

What prayers should we say. Are formal prayers, those we learned as children important? Yes they are. There is a power in these prayers, the Rosary, the chaplet of Divine Mercy, and so forth. These prayers have value, but their value is not in the words, they are not magical incantations, their value enters into a deeper level when they become the background music to our speaking with God. As we say the prayers we focus on the One who is within us, and we speak to Him. And we listen to Him.

"Teach us how to pray," the disciples asked the Lord in the *Gospel of Matthew*. The Lord's response, His Prayer, we call the Lord's prayer, the *Our Father*. He tells us to talk to God as a child speaks with his or her Father. His love for us is so deep that we are His children. He tells us to throw ourselves into continuing the work of establishing His Way, His Kingdom. We have been charged to bring the Gospel to the nations, as well as to the neighborhood. He tells us that He will satisfy our needs if we ask him, both the physical and spiritual, the need for bread and the need for forgiveness. So we should pray for help, help for our family, healing for those who are sick, help in our work or our school, help just getting older and entering into new phases of life. And He tells us to ask for protection from the attacks of evil. For the closer we come to God, and the more intense His Presence is within us, then the more fierce are the attacks of the opposition to this presence, call it evil in the world, call it the Devil.

We have been chosen by our Savior to be people of the new presence of God.

This presence exists in many ways in the world and in many degrees of intensity. It's greatest intensity is in the Eucharist and then in all the sacraments. Next is the Word of God in the Bible. There is a deep presence also in the Church, and in the Mystical Body of Christ. There is also a presence within each of us. This is the presence our Gospel for today proclaims. This presence is the indwelling of God. May we cherish and nourish this presence ever day of our lives.