

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, May 6th 2014

“The glory of God is the person fully alive,” Ireneus of Antioch.

We continue to celebrate the Resurrection. The Resurrection is a watershed of human history because through the Resurrection human beings are gifted with a new dimension of life through the sending of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, reminding us of this dimension in his farewell discourse at the last Supper, assured his disciples that it was better for them that he go for unless he departed, the Holy Spirit would not come.

And only through the presence of the Holy Spirit are we humans “fully alive.”

Stephen, even amidst his persecution, was “fully alive.” Filled with the Holy Spirit Stephen looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

What do we celebrate during the Easter Season? Yes, we celebrate a historical event of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead two thousand years ago. But we celebrate much more. We celebrate the rebirth of human nature through the sending of the Holy Spirit. Paul refers to this new life as a “new creation”; John talks about being born again by water and the Spirit.

Yes, for Christians, resurrected life begins here on earth and culminates in heaven.

And so during the Easter Season we Christians do well to attend to the signs of this new life in us. The signs of this new presence are scattered through out the New Testament.

John gives us the first sign in today’s gospel: belief in Jesus: “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.”

Paul in his letter to the Galatians gives perhaps the most comprehensive list of the gifts of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience endurance, kindness, generosity, faith.

“The glory of God is the person fully alive!” We become fully alive to the degree we allow the Holy Spirit to transform us.

The fitting response to this Easter gift is the Easter antiphon: Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God! Praise God!

Dick Hauser, S.J.