

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Apr 28th 2016

“The whole assembly fell silent and listened.”

Meetings, meetings, and more meetings! Councils, conclaves, conferences, conventions, and committees! Then there are summits, assemblies, reunions, and all kinds of ways we gather together for learning, gathering information, and to make communal, congregational, ecclesial, organizational and even family decisions. Sometime, too, we meet to resolve differences, and to understand more deeply the movement of the Spirit in times of important matters to be addressed. So we can hope! Do we experience silence and truly listen?

This is where we find the setting of our first reading. The early church gathers to figure out what is happening as the Spirit has sent apostles and disciples to the ends of the earth to share the Good News. Now there is the matter of Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) forming the community of believers. “God, the Holy Spirit, made no distinction between them for by faith God purified their hearts.” As Paul and Barnabas recall the words of the prophets and the saving grace of the Christ, Jesus, silence fell and the assembly listened. How important it is to discern and recognize the presence of the Spirit in the voices that speak. Perhaps the assembly remembers, too, the words of Jesus in the Gospel of today, to “remain in my love.” This decision is the matter of the heart, love, faith, and of trust. No longer are they Gentile or Jew, but one in the Christ.

Attending to the movements of the heart, and listening to the Spirit through prayer, is often referred to as discernment. We can experience this through individual or communal discernment processes. It is a path for clarity, a process to help make decisions, but most essentially, it is a way of living. It is a daily consciousness of being aware that the Spirit is alive and active within us, and in life. All we need to do is to be attentive. To be silent and to listen!

I am a person who actually enjoys meetings. I find them to be opportunities for creativity, exchange and reconciliation. I attend them knowing and trusting in the presence of the Spirit to guide and to enlighten. So, if you are at a meeting and there seems to be an impasse.... STOP, PRAY AND LISTEN!

A prayer of discernment: Prayer Before the Crucifix, by St. Francis of Assisi

Most high and glorious God,

Enlighten the darkness of my (our) heart,

Give me (us) correct faith, certain hope and perfect charity.

Give me (us) insight and wisdom

So I (we) may always discern your holy and true command.

God’s holy and true command? “Love one another! Remain in my love!” We are told this so that “God’s joy may be in you and your joy might be complete.”

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