

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, May 3rd 2016

Feast of Saints Philip and James, Apostles

“Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.”

“That will be enough for us”? Probably not. We humans never seem to have enough certainty and trusting deeply in God is a lifelong process.

When I was in graduate school 25 years ago, I was surrounded by fellow students who were priests, sisters and ministers. At that time few lay people were studying to be spiritual directors and my corporate background as a married woman with children did not seem to line up with the gifts of the other vowed religious students. For quite a while, I agonized with my insecurity, wondering if this deep call I felt to Creighton’s Christian Spirituality Program could be real when my fears were so real too.

On a particularly dark day, I begged God for some sign, some confirmation that I was being called to be a spiritual director. A few hours later I found a letter in the mail from a young Jesuit on retreat who wrote to say that he believed I would be a wonderful spiritual director and a gift to others. Of course I was delighted and consoled.

For about five minutes until the doubts returned.

That kind of doubt is what Jesus seems to be facing from his followers today. He tells his disciples as clearly as he can, “If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” It’s a powerful and direct statement assuring them that they already know the Father because they know Jesus. The next line in the gospel Philip asks Jesus, ““Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.” Jesus, probably discouraged at these followers he loved so much, said to him, “Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip?” It wasn’t just Philip but all of the disciples who had spent so much time with Jesus, yet still did not believe or understand who he was.

And even though I am now comfortable as a spiritual director, I still feel like I am one of the disciples always challenging Jesus: “Show me something more and then I will follow you.”

The gospel has a remarkable message today as Jesus says whoever believes in him “will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these.” He is inviting us to really put our faith in him and from the strength of that faith we will continue with his works and his ministry. If I am limited in the works I do, it’s not because I haven’t seen enough or that there is not enough evidence, but because I simply don’t believe I can do more.

Jesus has just told me I can do more - yet I still don’t believe? Maybe that’s because my life is not grounded deeply enough in Jesus that I draw strength from him. Too often “the works that I do” are not coming out of my deep love for Jesus but out of my self-absorption and examination of my own doubts and fears. That’s when I discover that my real barrier is my own selfishness and self-absorption.

My marriage changed many years ago when I realized that I wanted to do more for my husband not because I was supposed to, but because I love him. I had to stop keeping score and simply love him better. That kind of love renewed our marriage. It's consoling to realize my relationship with Jesus can be renewed in the same way, not because I am supposed to integrate Jesus into my life but because I want to.

Jesus, help me to be more aware of your presence with me today, and to remember to talk to you, and to listen. Then, not only can I think of the works of mercy and healing you did, but I can do them in my own life, my family and my world.

Maureen Waldron-Creighton University's Collaborative Ministry Office