

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jun 2nd 2017

“Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to Peter, “Feed my sheep.” (John 21:17)

Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome. Like Jesus, they left home to speak words of new life to strangers. Some were hostile; others listened and their hearts were moved. A string of communities sprang up with local leaders instructed to “feed my sheep.” Religious and political authorities often mistrust travelers who arrive with new teachings. Troublemakers. Apostates.

Faced with harsh opposition, what keeps people from fleeing? What is more powerful than fear? We draw courage from the witness of others. If she speaks up, maybe I won’t remain silent. Jesus was buoyed by feisty figures like John the Baptist. Jesus’ followers shared stories that kept his memory strong. Remember the passion? We too can persevere. In the call to “follow me” Jesus promises to be with us through it all. Paul and Peter were not alone on the road that led to Rome. In dark hours, Jesus assures us that “the Holy Spirit will teach you everything and remind you of all I told you.”

In spring the campus church fills with families, staff, and faculty for the missioning of graduates headed for service or religious life. The ceremony is joyous. The last exam is over and this new adventure opens before them. Amidst pressures to achieve and advance in a profession, these young people have learned to listen and reflect. They depart as seekers ready to be changed by the people they will meet: sent by one community to be received by another. We raise our arms in blessing and farewell. Their openness to God’s call lifts us all.

God asks each person: do you love me? To answer God’s eager question takes us into our being. There at the core is love, the rock on which we stand. Emboldened by love, we go forth.

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