

Easter 6A God's Interruptions

Acts 17:22-31; Ps. 66:8-20; 1Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

We are moving in September to a new town house in this area, closer to the charge. And I am plunged into the necessary and hard work of downsizing – sifting and sorting through the accumulation of stuff to make decisions about what is essential to release, what is necessary to hold onto. Prayerfully I am also trying to pay attention to the core of my life – what I value and what I often don't see, that such interruptions in the patterns of life I have established are needed so that my life may be freed up. I know that I am not alone; many of you have done the same and at least one other person in the parish is doing it right now.

Jesus, in this portion of John's gospel, is freeing up the disciples as he moves on. He promises a new accompaniment; God's companion Spirit, so that they will remember the core of his teaching and the path of love. Their lives will continue to be interrupted – the old ways of working, of seeing will be possible if they remember that his love is for them and in him; that is what matters.

On Thursday evening several of us made our way to the cathedral to watch and pray as our bishop placed his hands on the heads of five interrupted lives. God has called them into the territory of release, the land of handing over. They are a sign, a witness, an image of our own lives, each one of us. When we think we have constructed a safe and predictable pattern, God interrupts.

Of course there are interruptions and there are INTERRUPTIONS. Those dealing with illness, natural disasters, and family turmoil are suffering loss of control and may be isolated by what they are facing. May they come to see that promise of Psalm 66: "Blessed be God who has not rejected my prayer, nor withheld his love from me." Rather than managing or surviving or even praying alone, the psalmist chooses community, chooses to remember God in a gathered body of faith. And his offering is a big one, not little doves but something costly, oxen and rams. This place is where we remember we are not alone; this place reminds us of our call to serve others.

Paul, in this portion from Acts, is alone in Athens. He has been driven out of Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. He has been interrupted in his desire to communicate the gospel. I think there is a lesson here in paying attention. Paul listens to what is being expressed, noticing how the Athenians are spiritual, searching for core truth, the openings into the hearts of longing. He uses language that has become familiar to us and to all who seek to ground their lives in the holy – "God in whom we live and move and have our being." These words came from their own philosophers and would extend into the 20th century with the concept of the Tillich's 'ground of our being.' "Two millennia later our pluralistic context resembles the Athenian pantheon....our loyalties are divided and the claims of Jesus are equally disruptive..." says one commentator. So it is a cause for celebration that Paul's witness touches our faith core.

Yes, God is the one in whom we live and move and have our being. God also lives in us, moves in and through us, claiming our very being as a place where the Holy One chooses to abide.

We move from “God is in this” as a prayer for the week to “God is in me and I am in God.” “They who have my commandments and keep them, Jesus says, are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.” There will be interruptions!

Loving God and being loved by God will reveal what needs to be moved along, and what needs to be left behind. Amen.

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