

May 21, 2017 John 14:15-21 & Acts 8: 5-8, 14-17

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [The Depth of Love](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [When What is Precious](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

[Another Counselor Promised](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

Fr. Beck invites to see as the child sees. The adults are all engaged in their own plans and thoughts, going about their business. But the child notices the doves. Since the Holy Spirit is often pictured as a dove and often appears when we least expect, it would do us all well if we kept our eyes open for the unexpected. Pity the poor disciples. How could they have expected what would happen in just a few hours? How could they have understood Jesus' talk of a 'counselor'? They were already beginning to feel like orphans with all his talk of leaving and dying. Yet in this 6th Sunday of the Easter season, we too sense that more is needed. In two weeks we will celebrate the coming of the Counselor/Holy Spirit, when they and hopefully we, will finally understand what he was trying to tell us all along.

Jn. 14:15 If you **love** me, you will **obey** what I **command**. 16 And I will **ask** the **Father**, and he will **give** you another **Counselor to be with you forever--** 17 the **Spirit of truth**. The **world cannot accept** him, because it neither **sees** him nor **knows** him. But you **know** him, for he **lives with you** and will be **in**

you. 18 I will not leave you as **orphans**; I will **come to you**. 19 **Before long**, the **world will not see** me anymore, but you **will see** me. Because **I live**, **you also will live**. 20 On that day you will **realize** that **I am** in my **Father**, and you are **in me**, and **I am** in you. 21 Whoever has my **commands** and **obeys** them, he is the one who **loves** me. He who **loves** me will be **loved** by my **Father**, and I too will **love him** and **show** myself to him."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus teaches that love connects us with everyone and everything. How has God come to you through love this Easter season?

PRAYER: I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU ORPHANED

Abandoned / Is there a human fear / Worse than the fear / of being abandoned?

Yet, / Here is promise. / A promise made by One Who / Calls Himself "The Truth."

How does the living of my days / Show I believe?

I SHALL COME TO YOU

Halpin, Marlene, Dominican. [Leading Prayer: Plain and Simple](#). Dubuque, IA. Brown Pub. 1990.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

GOD / FATHER: Jesus lives in the reality that the creator of all that is, (God), is also father of all. This father loves and wants the well-being of all the children of creation.

How does Jesus' understanding of the Father compare with all the other understandings of God in his day?

I AM: Reaching back to Exodus 3:14, we find these words identifying God.

What does John want me to 'know' by using these same words about Jesus?

OBEY: The word obey has its roots in the Latin work for hearing. In order to obey one first has to hear.

What do I need to hear from Jesus before I can obey what he is calling me to do?

COMMANDS: One who commands is one who has an expertise or mastery over someone or something.

What does Jesus have mastery over, that gives him the authority to command the disciples/me?

ASK: To ask is to try to get something by using words.

What has to happen in me before I can put something into words and then ask?



GIVE /ACCEPT: St. Augustine and St. Anslem said; “You do not believe after you have understood, but through belief you get light and insight and understanding.”

How does my acceptance of Jesus’ words, open me up to God’s gift of love?

COUNSELOR: Other translations use the word Paraclete, which means one who is an advocate, helper, and mediator. This is one who stands alongside, to give continuous witness of the Father through Jesus.

Have I ever experienced a presence alongside me supporting and enlightening me? If so, what was it like?

BE WITH YOU / LIVES WITH YOU / IN YOU / COME TO YOU: The Father and Jesus will be with, live with, be in and come to you by way of the Counselor/Paraclete.

How does the Spirit enable me to see more completely Jesus and the Father?

FOREVER: Something is forever when it has no end. Our spirit seems to ‘know’ that it will have no end.

Why is this the only appropriate outcome for my life?

SPIRIT OF TRUTH: The Spirit was believed to be the great illuminator. With the approaching feast of Pentecost, the struggling disciples desperately needed enlightenment.

How does spending time with the Word help to enlighten me and bring me the spirit of truth?

SEES / KNOWS / NOT SEE / WILL SEE / REALIZE / SHOW: Jesus realizes that the disciples are all over the place in their ability to understand/see/realize what he is trying to show them. He also knows that shortly they will show this as they betray him and thus give into the wisdom of the “world”.

Is my faith life similar to theirs? If so, does this text comfort me?

ORPHANS: Students of a Rabbi often spoke of themselves as orphans after the Rabbi’s death.

When Jesus uses this word, does he show that he is very aware of where the disciples are that night? Do I think that after Pentecost, they will still feel like orphans?

BEFORE LONG: Jesus promises that his absence won’t be long. He knows that the wobbly faith of those with him will need his return soon.

If I had been there that night, would I have clung to these words like a life raft?

LOVES ME / LOVE ME / LOVED ME: John’s gospel is all about love. It could be said in three words. God is love. All the rest is there to tell about the who, where, when, how and why of this all-encompassing love. The world had never heard such talk about God.

How often I hear such talk about God today? Where do I hear it?

COUNSELOR / HOLY SPIRIT: John introduces the reality of the Holy Spirit or Counselor now. It will be much later after having had the Pentecost experience, before the disciples will really connect with what Jesus is saying.

What is my conception of the Holy Spirit? Have I ever experienced a source of wisdom or strength beyond myself that helped me meet a challenge? Could it have been the Holy Spirit?

WORLD: Humanity has always hungered for the unlimited. The world, that reality that is limited by space and time, can only promise what it has to give. It can only give limited time, limited love, and limited experiences.

What is Jesus saying when he says that he is giving a peace that the ‘world’ cannot give?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Jn. 14: 15 // Jn. 10: 10; Wis. 6:18; 1 Jn. 2:3; Jn. 14: 16 //Jn. 15:26; Jn. 14: 17 // Jn. 16: 13; Mt. 26:20; 2 Jn. 1f; Jn. 14:Jn. 10: 10; Jn. 14: 21 // Jn. 16: 27; 1 Jn. 2:3; 3:24;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Acts 8: 5-8, 14-17; [Ps. 66: 1-20](#); 1 Pt. 3: 15-18; Jn. 14: 15-21; Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 17: 22-31; [Ps. 66: 8-20](#); 1 Pt. 3: 13-22; Jn. 14: 15-21;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

There is no theology of prayer that is not a theology of compassion. Thomas Merton

John, in his Gospel, describes the Holy Spirit as a paraclete, an advocate ... a lawyer for the poor. What an interesting concept! John tells us that the crucifixion of Jesus will set free the paraclete and that it will convict the world of its wrongness in crucifying an innocent person, Jesus. Among other things then, the Holy Spirit in John is the defender of the accused, of the victim, of the scapegoat, of anyone whom society deems expendable for the sake of the culture. To live in the Holy Spirit, therefore, is to be an advocate, a lawyer, for the poor and for those who are being victimized and scapegoated by the culture. [Fr. Ron Rolheiser](#)

Nowhere is there any visible sign of glory. But, because in every town and village and hamlet of the world there are those who have surrendered their lives, who have made their offering daily, from the small grains of the common life, a miracle of Love is happening all the time, everywhere. The Holy Spirit is descending upon the world. Caryl Houselander

Those who have gone to the depths—of suffering, awe, or silence—discover an Indwelling Presence. It is a deep and loving “yes,” an “amen” or “let it be,” that is inherent within you. In Christian theology, this inner presence is described as the Holy Spirit: God as immanent, within, and even our deepest and truest self. Richard Rohr

The Holy Spirit is the point of contact between God and ourselves. The Holy Spirit gives us a transfusion of divine life by which we live spiritual lives. Whereas the Holy Spirit is God as Gift, the human spirit is creature as receptor, the vehicle created by God within the human person that is able to receive the Divine Persons. Through the Holy Spirit, God breathes out. Through our spirits, we breathe God in. Pgs. 12-13.

Goergen, Donald. *Fire of Love: Encountering the Holy Spirit*. NY, Paulist Press. 2006..

He (Johannes Tauler (ca 1300-1361) referred to “this wonderful divine spark deeper inside us and closer to us that we are ourselves,” “the very depths of the soul where God is infinitely closer to the soul and more integral to it that is the soul itself,” “the most intimate region of the soul, its most secret and inmost depths, where God is present essentially, actually, and substantially,” and “God Himself firing the spirit with a spark from the divine abyss.” Pg. 9.

Goergen, Donald. *Fire of Love: Encountering the Holy Spirit*. NY, Paulist Press. 2006..

How does man attain to a real union of love with his neighbor? Not merely by abstract agreement about truths concerning the end of all things and the afterlife, but by a realistic collaboration in the work of daily living in the world of hard facts in which everyone must work in order to eat. Thomas Merton

The Eucharistic celebration reaches its apex in the Lord’s words, *Take and eat; take and drink*. To take is to hold, however, it is not only to hold, but also to be held. The Eucharistic celebration is communion in a mutual self-gift and in reciprocal possession. This is how Jesus’ words are fulfilled: *You are in me and I in you* (Jn. 14:20). Pg. 374.

Olivera, Bernardo, O.C.S. O. *The Search for God: Conference, letters, and homilies*. Kalamazoo, MI. Cistercian Pub. 2002.

Philosophers and psychologists have had great difficulty understanding how inert, dead matter can lead to living consciousness. But that’s not how it happens. In our quantum view of the universe, consciousness is ubiquitous. Intelligence is everywhere. And the deeper you go beneath the surface, the more intelligence, the more dynamism, the more awareness, until at the foundation of the universe there is a field of pure, abstract universal existence –universal Consciousness...the unified field.”

Hagelin, John. *Light of Consciousness*.

Realization is not something we can do; it’s only something we can be ready for. Zenkai Blanche Hartman.

Contemporary psychiatric research notes that anxiety and fear are related emotions, and both relate to action. Fear stimulates avoidance and escape, but when these or any actions are blocked or thwarted, fear turns into anxiety. At the core, all emotions presuppose certain kinds of knowledge. In fear, this knowledge is an awareness of danger....Though Middle Easterners readily interact with the world of the spirits, these contacts always stir fear because of their potential danger. One is never certain of the nature of the spirit (good, bad, mischievous) or of the possible outcome of the encounter.

Pilch, John J. *The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle B*. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. 1996. Page 88.

Compassion is neither pity nor mercy, but the willingness to offer others, in their suffering, “the gift of our presence.” Irma Zaleski

Some are even reluctant believers, like the great C. S. Lewis. How patient Christ is with those who have seen the truth that He is Lord and God, but who do not want to give in! When all the defensive arguments C. S. Lewis put forward were demolished, He buried himself in work to avoid a confrontation with Christ. He wrote in his Autobiography *Surprised by Joy*: “Night after night, whenever I lifted my mind from work, I was aware of the steady, unrelenting approach of Him, whom I earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had come upon me. I gave in, and knelt and prayed. Perhaps that night the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England, I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing...the divine humility which will accept a convert on such terms....that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful.” **C. S. Lewis**

For a good examination of God as our counselor see: “Is God a Prosecuting Attorney or a Defense Attorney” in Linn, Dennis, et al. *Good Goats*. Mahwah, NY. Paulist Press. 1994. Pages 21ff.

What God most longs to discover in us is our willingness to embrace ourselves as we are at our beginning – empty, little, and poor. Our willingness gives God free space within us to work out the Divine Plan. Our potential for greatness is tremendous. Acceptance of our littleness makes it possible for our greatness to emerge. Our littleness is not a choice. It is simply the way we are. Our greatness, however, is a choice. When we choose to accept the life God has given to us, when we allow God to fill our emptiness, we are choosing greatness. Wiederkehr, Macrina, OSB. *A Tree Full of Angels*. San Francisco, CA. Harper & Row. 1988. Page 11.

In these May Gospels Jesus is portrayed as being deeply reluctant to leave his followers behind. He loves them. He will miss them. He will always be with them, but not in the same way he has been. He will take care of them as best he can. He wants to reassure them, yet he cannot deny the pain of separation from which they will suffer - and by implication from which he too will suffer. He promises them that they will not be alone, he will send another to be their inspiration and guide, the advocate, the guardian, the spirit of truth. Reading the later doctrine of the Trinity back into this passage we recognize the promise that God's Holy Spirit will always be with the followers of Jesus. The Spirit's invisible but powerful presence will be with them until finally Jesus is reunited with them. This message was intended primarily for the early Christians who believed in Jesus but who lamented for his absence. But it is also intended for us. We are not alone. No matter how bad things might seem, Jesus is still with us. Fr. Andrew Greeley

"The essence of love and compassion is understanding, the ability to recognize the physical, material, and psychological suffering of others, to put ourselves "inside the skin" of the other. We "go inside" their body, feelings, and mental formations, and witness for ourselves their suffering. Shallow observation as an outsider is not enough to see their suffering. We must become one with the subject of our observation. When we are in contact with another's suffering, a feeling of compassion is born in us. Compassion means, literally, "to suffer with."—Thich Nhat Hanh

The Present is the point at which Time touches Eternity. Of the present moment, and of it only, humans have an experience analogous to the experience which [God] has of reality as a whole; in it alone, freedom and actuality are offered them. He would therefore have them continually concerned either with Eternity (which means being concerned with Him) or with the Present—either meditating on their eternal union with, or separation from, Himself; or else obeying the present voice of conscience, bearing the present cross, receiving the present grace, giving thanks for the present pleasure. C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), "The Screwtape Letters"

I have a capacity in my soul for taking in God entirely. I am as sure as I live that nothing is so near to me as God. God is nearer to me than I am to myself; my existence depends on the nearness and the presence of God. - Meister Eckhart

A PRAYER TO THE GOD WHO FELL FROM HEAVEN

If you had stayed / tightfisted in the sky / and watched us thrash / with all the patience of a pipe smoker,
I would pray / like a golden bullet / aimed at your heart. / But the story says / you cried / and so heavy was the tear / you fell with it to earth / where like a baritone in a bar / it is never time to go home. / So you move among us / twisting every straight line / into Picasso, / stealing kisses from pinched lips, / holding out a hand in the dark. / So now when I pray / I sit and turn my mind / like a television knob / till you are there / with your large, open hands / spreading my life before me / like a Sunday tablecloth / and pulling up a chair yourself / for by now / the secret is out. / You are at home.

Shea, John. The God Who Fell From Heaven. Allen, TX. Argus Communications. 1979. Page 90.

CHOOSE LIFE: Sometimes we are prisoners in prisons of our own design. We've carefully built our walls, we've made our prison safe and comfortable and then we have chosen to lock ourselves inside. And we do not call it a prison at all, we call it our home or work or responsibility. We are very careful to post guards so that nothing threatens the security of our prison. Some of us live and die there and suppose that we have been happy and that living was good.

But sometimes, something or someone happens to us and the walls are shattered, and we lie helpless and exposed...in view are new horizons, new ideas, new experiences. When this happens many of us quickly gather the stones and rebuild our prison and retreat inside, but some few look around and crawl out of the rubble and gaze into the distance and wonder what "stuff" the world is made of. They venture out to taste and smell and feel. These people never build prisons again. They are willing to risk the hurt and possible failure of living and loving and dying with no guarantee of safety. They live with only the promise that there is fullness in living. They take the risk and choose life.

Molle Dee Rundle Page 50. Grana, Janice, Ed. Images. Winona, MN. St. Mary's College Press. 1976.

Love Flows

Effortlessly, / Love flows from God into man, / Like a bird / Who rivers the air / Without moving her wings. /
Thus we move in His world / One is body and soul, / though outwardly separate in form / As the Source strikes the note, / Humanity sings--- / The holy Spirit is our harpist, / And all strings / Which are touched in Love / Must sound.

Mechthild of Magdeburg (1210-1297) German visionary and poet Mitchell, Stephen. The Enlightened Heart. NY. Harper & Row. 1989. Page 65.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are reviewed on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014. Pgs. 115-119. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2008. Pgs. 78-80 To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2011. Pgs. 93-96. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)