



May 26, 2019 John 14: 23-29 & Acts 15: 1-2, 22-29

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#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

It is so hard to feel peace when we are parting with someone we love, someone we need, and someone who makes everything feel right. Certainly, the disciples felt anything but peace as they heard these words at the last supper. But Jesus knew that his part of the plan of creation history on this earth was completed. Now, the disciple's part of the plan needed to begin. Jesus was as confident that the Father would enable them to do this, as he was confident of his own resurrection. Now it is our turn to contribute what we have to offer to this plan. Spend some time reflecting on the part only you can play in God's offer to creation history.

#### John 14:23-29

14: <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, "Those who **love me** will **keep my word**, and my **Father** will love them, and **we will come to them** and **make our home with them**. <sup>24</sup> Whoever does not **love me** does not **keep my words**; and the

word that you hear is not mine, but is **from the Father** who **sent me**. <sup>25</sup> "I have said these things to you **while I am still with you**. <sup>26</sup> But the **Advocate**, the **Holy Spirit**, whom the **Father** will **send in my name**, will **teach you everything**, and **remind you** of all that I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> **Peace I leave** with you; **my peace I give** to you. I do not **give** to you as the **world** gives. Do not let your **hearts be troubled**, and do not let them **be afraid**. <sup>28</sup> You heard me say to you, 'I am **going away**, and I am **coming to you**.' If you **loved me**, you would **rejoice** that I am **going** to the **Father**, because the **Father** is greater than I. <sup>29</sup> And **now I have told you** this before it **occurs**, so that when it does **occur**, you may **believe**. <sup>3</sup>

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Jesus left us with the promise of the Holy Spirit's guidance and teaching. Does this promise give me the courage to obey his teachings?

**PRAYER:** Lord, your presence remains and intensifies with every moment of being loved. I unwrap this gift each time I sit in quiet and re-member your words and connect them with the ways you bring them into being in my life. Then the peace you promised settles in and makes all things well. Help me in my troubled times to trust that you will never leave me alone. Amen.

#### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**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 before.

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

**KEEP MY WORD:** Jesus' message about the love of the Father set the stage for the kind of lives the believers were to stay true to/obey.

*How does accepting God's love enable you to obey and lead the kind of life that Jesus calls you to live?*

**WE WILL COME TO THEM:** Jesus' intimate connection with God now is expressed with the word we.

*Who are those in your life that you use that same "we" word to describe yourself?*

**MAKE OUR HOME WITH THEM:** To make a home to abide with someone.

*How had the Father and Jesus made a "home" with you?*

**WORDS BELONG TO THE FATHER:** Jesus consistently points beyond himself to the Father as the source of all that he is and does.

*Have you accepted Jesus' understanding of God, or are you working from a pre-Jesus understanding? How can you tell which understanding you have accepted?*

**WHILE STILL WITH YOU:** The time is coming when the disciples will no longer have the physical presence of Jesus in their midst in the only way they could imagine. It must have set tremors down their spines to hear these words.

*Have you ever had to take up a responsibility before you were ready for it? Who left you with this responsibility? How did they equip you to carry on once they were gone? How does answering these questions help you to get in touch with what the disciples must have been going through?*

**ADVOCATE / HOLY SPIRIT:** John introduces the reality of the Holy Spirit or advocate now; one who pleads another's cause before a judge, a pleader, counsel for defense, legal assistant. It will be much later after having had the Pentecost experience, before the disciples will really connect with what Jesus is saying.

*What is your conception of the Holy Spirit? Have you ever experienced a source of wisdom or strength beyond yourself that helped you meet a challenge? Could it have been the Holy Spirit?*

**FATHER:** Since Abraham, the people have related to God as Father. Jesus now brings a new meaning for this word.

*How does Jesus change the meaning of Father for the people? Would the people of Moses' time have talked about the Father in the same way?*

**SEND IN MY NAME:** Jesus is promising to send someone in his name that will enable the disciples to live into the call to love as he has loved. This new source of faith will unite the Father with the Son, the Son with the Holy Spirit, and Holy Spirit with the Father in ways that can only be known by experience.

*How does this Trinitarian understanding of God express itself in your life? If you had to explain this reality to a Muslim or Jew, what words would you use?*

**TEACH YOU EVERYTHING / REMIND YOU OF EVERYTHING:** Jesus has taught the disciples what they need to know, but he realizes that they cannot fully understand as yet. The Counselor will remind—bring to mind again—all that he taught them in a way that will now reveal its deep truths.

*When was the last time you said, "OH! That's what he/she meant?" Or, "That's what it's all about; I knew that." Did you then remember something told you long before? As you read Acts, can you see that happening to the disciples as they begin living their new faith in the risen Lord?*

**PEACE I LEAVE / PEACE I GIVE:** Shalom, the blessing that prays for the total wellbeing of the other is the kind of peace that Jesus gives and leaves. The Resurrection guarantees that this life is not all that there is for humanity.

*How long will it take for the disciples to realize what Jesus means by peace? How does this assurance bring Shalom/ peace to you?*

**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?*

**HEARTS BE TROUBLED / AFRAID:** We come to this reading from the other side of the Resurrection. Of course the disciples' hearts were troubled. How could they not be? It will take the Resurrection and Pentecost to begin to free their hearts from the fears and uncertainties at this last supper together before Jesus' death.

*Is your heart troubled or afraid about anything? How can this gospel text help you with that fear?*

**GOING AWAY / COMING TO YOU:** Jesus was totally confident that death was not the end of life. He had to "go away" through the door of death, in order to "come back" through the door of Resurrection.

*Do you believe that you too will have to 'go away' before you can 'come back'? What feelings surface, as you encounter this reality in other's deaths? Your own eventual death?*

**REJOICE:** With his total confidence in the Resurrection, Jesus could speak of his going with an eagerness to get to the other side of the limits of this "world".

*Have you ever been with someone who was ready to die? Were they confident in their own resurrection? If so, how did that change things for you?*

**NOW I HAVE TOLD YOU:** Jesus is bringing to a close his physical life. He is leaving the disciples with what they will need in the future in order that they too will be able to trust God's process in their own lives.

*What would the people in your life need to know from you if you were leaving them? Is there anything you need to complete in order to be able to leave them OK? Can you imagine you saying some of these same thing to them?*

**OCCURS:** When something happens we often say it occurs. Occurs implies it came spontaneously. It comes as a natural consequence.

*What can this imply about this event?*

**BELIEVE:** The disciples, like each of us, have to come to belief in the truths about God that were revealed in Jesus.  
*Does this form of study help you come to a deeper belief? How?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Jn 14:23 // Rev. 3; 20; Jn. 14:26 // Jn. 15:26; 16:13f; Jn. 14:27 // Eph. 2:14-16; Jn. 14:29 // Jn. 13:19; 16:4;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Acts 15:1-2, 22-29; [Ps. 67: 2-8](#); Rev. 21:10-14, 22-23; Jn. 14:23-29;  
Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 16: 9-15; [Ps. 67](#); Rev. 21:10, 22- 22:5; Jn. 14:23-29;

#### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

To die for one's friends is to conquer death. Its value as a threat is replaced with another value entirely, that of Love. And so John introduces the vocabulary of love as the counter to that of violence and death. Death is redeemed because it has a new meaning; the old meaning is now eclipsed. In this Gospel story this is expressed by the extraordinary absence of suffering for Josue. Death has no control over him. Pg 211. [Jesus and his Enemies](#)

When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace." - Jimi Hendrix

Peace demands the most heroic labor and the most difficult sacrifice. It demands greater heroism than war. It demands greater fidelity to the truth and a much more perfect purity of conscience. Thomas Merton

God's love for us is everlasting. That means that God's love for us existed before we were born and will exist after we have died. It is an eternal love in which we are embraced. Living a spiritual life calls us to claim that eternal love for ourselves so that we can live our temporal loves - for parents, brothers, sisters, teachers, friends, spouses, and all people who become part of our lives - as reflections or refractions of God's eternal love. No fathers or mothers can love their children perfectly. No husbands or wives can love each other with unlimited love. There is no human love that is not broken somewhere. When our broken love is the only love we can have, we are easily thrown into despair, but when we can live our broken love as a partial reflection of God's perfect, unconditional love, we can forgive one another our limitations and enjoy together the love we have to offer. Henri Nouwen

I choose love. No occasion justifies hatred; no injustice warrants bitterness, I choose love. Today I will love God and what God loves. - Max Lucado, "Upwords"

Notice that the lover, acting out of the formless existential self, does not say ( as a descriptive self world), I am I insofar as I am different from you, insofar as I am not you," but " I am I precisely insofar as I give myself to you, live in you, unite with you." We see, then, that love does two things simultaneously: it both differentiates and unites. There is differentiation because what love *is* the outgoing energy from one to another. But what does this outgoing act do? It unites with that other. And the more a lover goes out in love to unite with the other, the more the lover is established as a lover. The more I give myself away in love, the more I become myself, because that's what I *am*, a lover.

Bruteau, Beatrice. [The Grand Option](#): Personal Transformation and a New Creation. South Bend, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2001. Pg. 118.

The peace Jesus leaves is a gift. It is not as the world gives peace. It does not mean an end of conflict with the "world" (which he means that part of society that rejects him). On the contrary, it is a peace that reigns in the midst of conflict with the world. Jesus' peace is most akin to peace of mind in the center of the struggle. It is a peace of doing the right thing at the right time. It follows from the realization that the reality of life is more powerful than the reality of death. It is an Easter blessing.

Beck, Fr. Robert. [The Witness](#). May 1, 1983. Pg. 5.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you," Jesus says in the Gospel of John, after promising the Holy Spirit; "not as the world gives do I give to you." Here is the convergence point of the religions, the peace God, the peace which is the gift of God, "not as the world gives Yet it is the peace we also give to one another, like the Sabbath peace, *shabbat shalom* as everyone would say to one another a Friday afternoon as everything was closing in Jerusalem, or like the kiss of peace, the greeting we would give to one another every time at Eucharist, or like the handclasp and the kiss on the hand we gave to one another in the Sufi mosque in the Old City, after chanting and dancing and sharing mint tea. I feel the paradox of speaking of the peace of God at a time when religious wars are being fought all over the world. Still, it is the truth, it is possible to live in peace if we pass over to the mystery of God in one another and come back to the mystery of God in ourselves. The locus of peace, I believe, is in passing over, in going over to one another and coming back again to ourselves in going deep in one another, in going deep in ourselves, in going through our death to God's life, in going through our loneliness to God's presence, in embracing mystery. Dunne, John. [The Homing Spirit](#). NY. Crossroad Pub. 1987. Page 115.

The day will come when, after harnessing space, the winds, the tides and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, we shall have discovered fire. Teilhard de Chardin

*The peace which the world cannot give...* The peace of Christ may give us peace in this world, and it may even contribute to peace between men, but it is not what the “world” means by peace. The peace of Christ cannot be shaken by misfortune; it is not a mood or emotional state, nor a state of physical security. In fact it could be described as the very opposite of worldly peace: it is a state of *danger*. As Adrienne von Speyr writes, “No one knows into what adventure the Lord’s peace may lead him. We seek peace out of fear of war. But nothing is fundamentally more insecure than a worldly peace treaty. For it gives the enemy time to make his preparations in secret. One never has to be more alert and suspicious than during the world’s peace. But the Lord has no fear; nor has he any fear of fear.” We have to put aside, then, our normal associations with the word “peace” if we are to understand the gift of peace that Jesus offers his disciples. Caldecott, Stratford. [Zeal in Detachment: The Paradox of Peace in Christianity](#). Parabola. Fall 1996. Pages 48ff.

Great peace for the last couple of days since the decision. Any day one could write: ‘great peace’; but this is a very special and new dimension of peace, a tranquility that is not got by cultivation. It is given and “not as the world gives, do I give unto you.” The peace is not “it,” but confrontation with “thou.” Here, Buber is certainly right. Confrontation with Thee in this world of solitude all because of this one word yesterday. All is unified by this. One will, one command, one gift. A new creation of heavenly simplicity. Thomas Merton

Tertullian, in his document called [Against Praxeas](#), written in the early part of the third century, quotes John 14:28 in his effort to combat the early heresy called Patripassianism. This teaching maintained that there was no distinction between the Father and the Son.

With regard to the law, Jesus did not observe any law which contradicted love. The Pharisees and lawyers spoke of cases in law, but Jesus responded in terms of persons, loved by God and deserving of the respect which that love implied. (Jn. 14: 23-24) Heaps, John. [A Love That Dares to Question: A Bishop Challenges His Church](#). Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans Pub. Col. 1998. Pg. 89.

The object of *full-knowledge* can be summed up as the intimate life of God and his saving will be given by Christ in the Spirit. Its immediate result is an authentically Christian life. At the same time *full-knowledge* of Christ requires the practice of virtue, counter to the teaching of some Gnostics !Olivera, Bernardo, O.C.S.O.

For an examination of how the early Church struggled with the beginnings of the concept of the Trinity and its reliance on John 14: 28 for this struggle see: Rubenstein, Richard. [When Jesus Became God: The Epic fight over Christ’s Divinity in the Last Days of Rome](#). NY. Harcourt Brace & Co. 1999. Chapter nine, especially Pg. 187.

As we explored the doctrine of God from our Easter Saturday perspective,, it became increasingly clear that God is not to be conceived of as a solitary monad, but as a family: plural, relational, and mutually dependent; and that the spaciousness within this community of love is room left open for ourselves and all humanity: mansion in the Father’s house (Jn. 14:2) where, as God’s adopted children and fellow heirs with the Son, we are free to be and to fulfill ourselves, at peace with the god who loves us (Jn. 14:27). Lewis, Alan E. [Between Cross and Resurrection](#). Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans. 2001. Page 445.

In the Gospels, fidelity in keeping the commandments is the only real criterion to tell real prayer from illusion. Rolheiser, Ronald. [The Holy Longing](#). NY. Doubleday. 1999. Pg. 62.

### [The Wisdom of Jesus Christ](#)

The “Wisdom (or Sophia) of Jesus Christ” recounts a discussion between Jesus and his disciples after his resurrection. In it, Jesus responds to the eager questions of his followers about the ultimate nature of reality. This kind of post resurrection dialogue was a popular form of Gnostic writing; by placing the ultimate revelation of truth in the period after Jesus’ life, the author was able to show its hidden, esoteric quality. Here Jesus is shown to be a divine aeon, come to reveal the true nature of the Perfect God and Father; of the divine, celestial realm above; of the constitution of humans; and of the way of ultimate salvation through perfect knowledge, a salvation that involves a return to the one God in whom the enlightened will repose forever.

“After he rose from the dead, his twelve disciples and seven women continued to be his followers and went to Galilee onto the mountain (91) called “Divination and Joy” When they gathered together and were perplexed about the underlying reality of the universe and the plan and the Holy providence and power of the authorities and about everything that the Savior is doing with them in the secret of the holy plan, the Savior appeared, not in his previous form, but in the invisible spirit. And his likeness resembles a great angel of light. But his resemblance I must not describe. No mortal flesh could endure it, but only pure (and) perfect flesh, like that which he taught us about on the mountain called “Of Olives” in Galilee. And he said: “Peace be to you! My peace I give to you!” and they all marveled and were afraid. The Savior (92) laughed and said to them: “What are you thinking about? (Why) are you perplexed? What are you searching for?” Philip said: “For the underlying reality of the universe and the plan.” Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Pages 177-8.

God is the self-related community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the community of divine love, the principle of creativity is always there, in the form of the Father; the principle of otherness is always there, in the form of the Son; and the principle of ecstasy is always there, in the form of the Spirit. Thus the inner divine life is characterized by a self-relatedness that provides the common matrix for God’s outward relationality. The world is created out of God’s will, a divine will that stimulates and enjoys otherness. Gregersen, Niels Henrik. [Risk and Religion: Toward a Theology of Risk Taking](#). Zygon. 6/03 P. 371

As truly as God is our father, so just as truly is he our mother. In our father, God Almighty, we have our being: in our merciful mother we are remade and restored....It is I, the strength and goodness of fatherhood. It is I, the wisdom of motherhood. It is I, the light and grace of holy love, It is I, the Trinity; it is I the unity. Julian of Norwich  
Rolheiser, Ronald. [Against an Infinite Horizon](#). NY. Crossroad Pub. 2001 Pg. 177

Whether or not you claim to be interested in it, from the moment you are alive you are bound to be concerned with love, because love is not just something that happens to you: it is a certain special way of being alive. Thomas Merton, *Love and Living*. (New York: Harcourt): 27.

First keep the peace within yourself, then you can also bring peace to others. -Thomas A. Kempis

#### **SUGGESTED READINGS:**

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle C 2013*. Pgs. 96-99.

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2007*. Pgs. 97-99.

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2010*. Pgs. 76-78.

#### Letting Go

I find that  
my spiritual growth is on some level  
or in some way  
about letting go.

Once I saw what was trapping me  
and keeping me from freedom  
I saw the need to let it go.

But most of us have had no training in that direction.  
Rather, more is supposed to be better.

I find that  
true liberation is letting go of my false self,  
letting go of my cultural biases,  
letting go of my fear of loss and death,  
letting go of a religion with all the answers,  
allowing no questions.

Freedom is letting go of wanting more and better things,  
and it is letting go of my need to control and manipulate God  
and others.

It is even letting go of my need to know  
and my need to be right,  
which I only discovered late in life.

I become free  
as I let go of these stifling addictions:  
my need for power and control,  
my need for safety and security,  
my need for affection and esteem,  
and my need for answers.

*Love,  
John*

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