

Pentecost Vigil Office

(Exodus 19:3-8.16-20 / Ezechiel 37:1-14 / Romans 8:22-27 / John 7:37-39)

07.06.2014

In the gospel passage we listen to at the heart of this night of Solemn Vigil, Jesus speaks of giving living water to satisfy the people's thirst, our thirst.

Really what Jesus declares is that He is the source of living water.

What He says is that it is He who satisfies our deepest thirsts, desires and longings.

The words Christ spoke here in chapter 7 of John's gospel remind us of His encounter earlier on in the story with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well: the story we read in John 4.

You may recall the Master's words to the Samaritan woman: *If only you knew what a wonderful gift God has for you, and who I am, you would ask me for some living water!*

In the meeting with the Samaritan at Jacob's well, Jesus broke through all the traditional barriers to reach out to this woman.

He accepted her as she was and where she was at in her life story.

In so doing, Jesus gave her the possibility of making a fresh start in life.

He offered her the possibility of beginning life again, after her many trials and errors along the way.

By His attitude of openness and His willingness to overcome the obstacles separating the Samaritan woman and Himself, Jesus illustrated that God's love reaches out to all and excludes none.

Jesus' constant attention to those who found themselves on the outside of the inner circle, His persistent attention to those who had been rejected, condemned and shunned, would have us realise that God's love is for all.

Jesus' examples shows us that God's love does not hold some people at a distance.

It excludes no one.

Jesus' words and gestures manifest that God's love is an all-embracing love.

I see the attitude Jesus displayed at Jacob's Well and throughout the gospel story in so many similar settings as being of particular relevance to us in this land at this period in time.

Once again in recent times we have seen a surge of sectarian attitudes. Manifestations of intolerance have mounted to the fore. Once again we have witnessed the hurt, trouble and pain caused to many people and we have seen how the foolish words spoken by some have been taken up by others and spilled over into violent acts against vulnerable minorities.

There are words which some would claim to be words of truth that can be taken up by others as incitements to hatred.

We cannot and should not just remain silent before all this.

Silence is not an option for Christians in some circumstances.

Recently our community heard Sr Joan Chittister quote St John XXIII in a Talk she gave and which was recorded on CD. We listened to it in the refectory.

Sr Joan quoted St John XXIII who stated that those who say nothing before the kinds of ills we are witnessing these times in Northern Ireland are as much responsible for wrongs committed as those who speak harsh words or who commit violent acts.

The French have a saying: *Qui ne dit mot consent*: ... *Whoever says nothing agrees* ... They agree with what is being said or with what is happening.

It is interesting to see campaigns that had fallen into disuse have had to be revived: for example, the *Unite Against Hate Campaign*.

Jesus' words and actions show us that God's Holy Spirit is for all.
God's desire is that His *Spirit be poured out upon all flesh*.

The gift of the Spirit is not just for some chosen few.
It is not just for those who resemble us and with whom we are comfortable.

God's Spirit obliges us to open up and push forward our far too limited boundaries.
God's Spirit invites us to widen the space of our tent to welcome others in.
God's Holy Spirit is not just for those who are *one of ours*.

The original Pentecost event which we celebrate in this feast opened up God's salvation to all.

Our celebration of Pentecost tonight is meant to make that original event a living reality in our own time.
The gift of the Spirit is meant to take flesh in and through us in the Church and for the world of this day and age.

Jesus speaks of the living water He gives as being *an inexhaustible source within us*. He speaks of His Spirit as living water meant to flow into and out through us.

Our call is to be channels of divine life.
Our call is to bring God's life with us, and to allow it to flow out through us, wherever we go.

We could say that we are called to have the Holy Spirit *on tap* and to make this gift available to all around us.
For the Spirit to be *on tap* in our lives then we need to be connected to the source: we need to be united to Christ.
For the Spirit to reach others, *we* have to reach out to them!
We have to bear the Spirit of Christ to them.

Gathered here tonight for this Solemn Vigil, gathered around the Table of the Eucharist, we come here to connect with Christ; we come here to allow Him to connect with us.
At the end of this celebration (as at the end of every Eucharist) we will be commissioned once again; we will be sent forth to announce the gospel of the Lord.

Jesus connects with us this evening as He did with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well. He connects with us just as we are; He connects with us right where we are in our life story.

Christ's desire is to see us become what we see the Samaritan woman became from what we read the story recorded for us in John 4: a missionary.

The Lord's desire is that we go forth from this place to tell others about Him.
He wants us to share with others what our encounter with Jesus has led us to experience.
He longs to see us bear testimony to Him and relate to others what the Lord has done for us.

One of the great lessons of Pentecost is that we should share our story with others: it is that we

should bear witness to Christ and to the great things He has wrought in our lives.

The message we share may prove to be nothing less than the difference between life and death for some of those we encounter.

If only some of the people who encountered us experienced a faint reflection of what the Samaritan woman who met with Jesus at Jacob's Well experienced.

If only meetings with us became for others life-changing events in their lives!

Maybe we have already been graced to have had a meeting with someone that changed our life, because they reflected to us something of Christ's love and concern for us.

Could it be that someone's life will be changed through a meeting with us, because we reflect to them something of Christ's love and concern for them?

This is what we should hope for.

Let us pray:

Come Holy Spirit, flow through us.

Come Holy Spirit, reach out to others through us.

Make of us channels of your grace.

Melt us, mould us, fill us, use us.

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on us – continually flow into us, so that through us Your life may touch and change others for the better!

Amen!